DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 915 CS 000 266

AUTHOR	Painter, Helen W., Ed.
TITLE	Reaching Children and Young People Through Literature.
INSTITUTION	International Reading Association, Newark, Del.
PUB DATE	71
NOTE	80p.
AVAILABLE FROM	International Reading Association, 6 Tyre Avenue, Newark, Del. 19711 ($2.75 non-member, $2.00 member)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Authors; *Childrens Books; Conference Reports; *Elementary School Students; Fantasy; Foreign Relations; *Literature Appreciation; Literature Programs; Reading Habits; *Reading Interests; Reading Materials; Reading Skills; Realism; *Secondary School Students

ABSTRACT

This book, which contains selected papers given at the 1970 International Reading Association convention, is aimed at people who are looking for challenging material pertaining to literature for children and young people. It is divided into two sections. The first part--Qualities of Literature, Readers, and Writers in Action--contains a provocative article by Jean Karl, who assesses the present children's literature and looks into the future. Also in Part 1 is an article by Lloyd Alexander and another one about the man and his work. Mr. Alexander is winner of the 1969 Newbery award and has been acclaimed as the author of the greatest recent fantasy for children. The second section is entitled Literature in Action. All the articles are by people knowledgeable in the field: Charlotte S. Huck presents suggestions for improving interest and appreciation of literature, especially in elementary schools, supplemented with a reaction by Jo Stanchfield; J. W. McKay discusses the development of reading skills through literature at the secondary level; Dwight L. Burton presents his thinking about the content of the high school literature program; and William W. Crowder points out how literature can foster international relations. References are included. (This document previously announced as ED 047 910.) (Author/DH)

ED 068915

REACHING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH LITERATURE

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Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 73-148240

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The International Reading Association attempts, through its publications, to provide a forum for a wide spectrum of opinion on reading. This policy permits divergent viewpoints without assuming the endorsement of the Association.

Foreword

LEARNING to read is important, but once an individual has learned to read, the quality of what he reads and the fact that he finds continued satisfaction in reading ought to result in his becoming a lifetime reader. The International Reading Association is interested in all three of these aspects—the teaching of reading, the quality of the reading material, and the pursuit of reading.

This booklet originated at the 1970 convention of the IRA in Anaheim, for these papers, with but one exception, were originally given there. The provocative lead article by Jean Karl views the current status of children's literature from the vantage point of a children's book editor. Miss Karl has the distinction of being the only editor whose books have won both Newbery and Caldecott Awards in the same year.

Since Lloyd Alexander, who presented his paper at the Book and Author Luncheon, was a recent recipient of the Newbery Award for his book *The High King*, it seemed appropriate to include additional background information about him that would illuminate his work and present the man. Consequently, Dr. Helen Painter was asked to prepare an article about this distinguished author. His insightful approach to literature and Dr. Painter's well-researched analysis of the man and his work complete the first section of the monograph.

The second section contains five papers—three that relate to ways in which teachers can utilize literature in the classroom. Charlotte Huck suggests methods for improving interest and appreciation, supplemented with Jo Stanchfield's reaction, and J. W. McKay reports how reading skills can be developed through literature. The fourth paper, by Dwight L. Burton, describes the content of literature at the secondary level, and William W. Crowder's analysis of how literature can foster international understanding is the final paper in the section and the booklet.

Though this volume is thin, its quality is unmistakable. It

should be of interest not only to teachers of reading but to classroom teachers, parents, administrators, librarians, and others interested in upgrading the quality of what is read. It is hoped that those interested in the elementary school will read the articles designated for the secondary school, and vice versa, for viewing the total stream of literature throughout the school is important in lending perspective. In addition, the articles are interestingly written, and perhaps the ideas pertaining to one level have application at another.

The International Reading Association is pleased to add this booklet to its list of publications about literature.

HELEN HUUS, *President*
International Reading Association
1969-1970

Introduction

TO THOSE PEOPLE who are constantly looking for challenging material pertaining to literature for children and young people this bulletin should prove interesting indeed. It gathers together a range of significant ideas that will involve readers engaged at different levels of instruction; yet each paper offers material for the information and appreciation of all.

The bulletin is divided into two parts: *Qualities of Literature, Readers, and Writers* and *Literature in Action*. The first part contains a provocative article by Jean Karl, who assesses the present children's literature and looks into the future. Miss Karl is vice-president and editor of children's books of Atheneum Publishers. Closely associated with literature, readers, and writers, she has edited many distinguished books, including several award winners. Part one also contains an article by Lloyd Alexander and one about the man and his work. Mr. Alexander is winner of the 1969 Newbery award for the fifth book in a series dealing with the land of Prydain. (Two additional books are for young children.) He has been acclaimed as the author of the greatest recent fantasy for children, and his views toward literature are of particular value. Since his background and concerns are not known by all prospective readers, the third paper in this section is written by the editor and presents research data. The influences upon Mr. Alexander, his concern with Welsh legends, and his involvement in fantasy are clarified here. Besides the actual setting of these stories in a land that is, but "never was," the chronicles of Prydain focus on a hero searching for manhood and on the struggle between good and evil—universal themes not only in literature but in life.

The second section of this volume is *Literature in Action* and contains a set of papers with sound approaches that need to be brought again and again to readers. All the articles are by people knowledgeable in the field: Charlotte S. Huck of Ohio State University presents suggestions for improving interest and appreciation of

literature, especially in elementary school (with a reaction by Jo M. Stanchfield of Occidental College); J. W. McKay of Slippery Rock State College discusses the development of reading skills through literature at the secondary level; Dwight L. Burton of Florida State University presents his thinking about the content of the high school literature program; and William W. Crowder of Purdue University points out how literature can foster international relations.

All of these materials with one exception were presented as part of the convention program of the International Reading Association at Anaheim, California, in May 1970. Through this bulletin we hope to offer a refreshed view for those who heard some of the papers given by the authors at Anaheim and provide a challenging presentation to all readers and devotees of literature.

H.W.P.

QUALITIES OF LITERATURE, READERS, AND WRITERS

Contemporary Children's Literature

JEAN KARL
Atheneum Publishers

IF ANYONE WERE TO ASK us all what the problems of our day are, few, if any, of us would have trouble answering. The problems are there, and we know them. And most of us also see, in varying degrees, the problems that especially affect the children and young people of the country. We see the problems, and we try to understand. Sometimes we even try to help, although too often we are not effective in this. We are too close, too old, too establishment oriented to be accepted as helpers or advisers.

The question then comes, can books about problem situations written for young people be accepted by young people as they encounter their problems themselves and try to solve the questions that confront them, as they seek reflections of themselves to determine who they are, look for reassurances for their convictions, or find ways out of the maze of adolescence? The answer is, "perhaps." Perhaps adults who write books can have something to say that will be heard, but the acceptance of the message depends on the adult's capacity to move young readers. If an author is wise enough, "knowing" enough, secure enough in his own person—and remote enough as a person from the individual reader, yet close enough as a writer to the situations he pictures—he may be able to make the reader comfortable and accepting.

There are books today on endless subjects: drugs, war and peace, the "mis-meshing" of the generations, sex and wanted or unwanted pregnancies, group dynamics in organizations both socially acceptable to adults and not acceptable, racial tensions, political upheavals, riots, and the philosophies of materialism, pro and con. The black child has become the chosen race to be written about. Sex and drugs are as common in books as they are in real life. And it may be that a handbook for the young bomb thrower is not far off.

Today's books are both bad and good. Some meet the standards

of good literature as constructed in the past; some establish criteria for themselves that one suspects may be the new criteria for books yet to come; and some have no standards at all. Some simply exploit a time of change.

There is the book, for example, that presents a common situation—say a boy with a drug habit—puts its character through the accepted paces—robbery, muggings, pushing, and group highs—then solves the problem in a manner socially acceptable to adults—sends the boy off to a hospital where the cure and a friendly consultant work miracles and a new and better life begins. Fine. A really with-it book. But is it? This book can have its cliché character, its stock situations, and its too pat solution just as easily as the old-fashioned football story or the teenage romance where the fainthearted heroine finally wins the fair-haired boy.

Realism—facing today's problems in books—is not simply presenting in books what the reader already knows to be true, or wishes were true. It is not creating a façade that looks like something the reader knows to be true and modern, when a closer examination reveals the façade to be a stage set that simply gives a new look at an old sham act. Realism must have its roots in the actual emotions, the real concerns, the gut truths of what *is*—a far different thing from using today's scene as a backdrop for an old idea.

The author who writes a real book for today's children and young people, readers from age seven or eight up, must first of all look upon the problems of youth with sympathy. This is not as easy as it sounds. It means at least accepting as interesting, if not enjoying, the music, the idiom, the dress of the young. Beyond this acceptance, it means understanding the roots of rebellion, when there is rebellion, sensing young people's reactions as a group and as individuals to events of the day, to the movements of society, and to the demands made upon young people. It is living their despair with them, enjoying their moments of elation, and seeing their vision of the world as they wish it were. It is sensing their impatience for life as they want it to be and understanding their lack of understanding of why the millennium cannot arrive today.

Yet at the same time the adult must remain an adult, not draw

himself into a tight shell or bury his head in the sand like some disaffected older person. The adult must feel the idealism of the young, their impatience to move out and on, and at the same time must know the immensity of the problems involved. Such an adult involves himself deeply where the action is; at the same time holds himself apart and assesses the whole of what is happening, of what lies beyond the small part he plays. This adult is of the world and yet he has perspective on it.

This adult can write for children and young people and can make what he does a thing of immense value. Not many people have the capacity for complete involvement and yet complete detachment, for sympathy and yet an appreciation of what others do not see. Those who have these capacities in less than ideal measure can and do write well. They produce books that speak to today's problems, but that see the problems either in too remote or too close a form to be truly complete in the delineation of a situation; yet these books are needed. The great books, however, come from great souls, who live beyond the means of most. These writers almost instinctively, or sometimes with great and knowing insight, pitch their books at just the right key.

The writer of realism for today avoids the didactic, first of all. He does not see easy solutions. He does not preach. He does not insist that any one way is the right way. He sees every facet of a situation and he presents what he sees in the round. His viewpoint is there, of course—as it must be in any good book, fact or fiction—but his viewpoint is large enough to include all of his characters: father and son; liberal and conservative; black and white; rioter and police. The reader is led into the situation or the substance of the book (depending on whether it is fact or fiction). He can see, if his own prejudices will allow, a view of life that may be wider than his own, that does not condemn him for being what he is but rather makes him feel that there is a place for him as he is—in the world as it exists—and that he is not alone in his dreams and his failures.

The fine writer of realism may or may not identify himself with his characters, but he creates characters in his fiction that are real. They are not paper men ready to be blown about by the author's

breath; rather they live and move in a world as large as the author can make it; they move as real people whom readers will recognize as being true.

And when the greater writer of realism today puts his living characters with their non-didactic situations—or rather lets them live their lives as such people would live—the story does not explore one idea to the exclusion of all others. Although fiction of necessity must create limits around itself, must lift situations up out of life or place them under a magnifying glass in order that they may be seen, each situation still remains a part of a whole that goes beyond the limits of the book. The good author does not forget this and he lets as much as possible of the richness of the life that lies beyond the book extend its vibrations into the book.

The good writer sees life and presents it. Because he does not try to manipulate it, he is not so likely to fall into the traps that exist for the less honest. There are many fallacies prevalent among those who try to write realism today. Many writers do not understand what realism demands. Some feel they must make every kind of action acceptable to be accepted by the young; some feel that they must present only the acceptable to the adults to be right; some believe that a negative point of view is the whole approach to realism; and others prefer a rainbow approach—all this will pass if we bide our time, let it go, and look at the good and true and pure. True realism grows out of none of these. It comes instead from honesty, sincerity, and breadth of outlook that neither condemns nor reproaches. The author does not feel he must cast his lot with every new fad, every new trick of thought, every new approach to a problem; yet he does not condone what he himself does not appreciate.

The viewpoint of the author of the best problem fiction, or for that matter of the best writers of nonfiction about modern problems, is one that sees the situation from a distance. The distance between the reader and the characters or the situations he meets in a book may be small. The reader may become completely absorbed in them and lose himself entirely, not view the whole from outside. The writer may be completely involved emotionally and psychologically in what he writes. Yet part of him, the part that shapes the whole, the part that gives the book its directive and its limits, is outside of the book

keeping it fair, keeping it true, keeping it honest. The characters live their own lives in the plot; the events of nonfiction are not distorted; neither are they bent to the author's viewpoint. The viewpoint is large enough to allow a different interpretation by the reader and yet remain as a whole the author's expression of truth as he sees it.

This is not easy. It demands skills of craft that only the most mature of authors possess. It demands a knowledge of rhetoric, of grammar, of the power of words beyond mere meaning. It demands a knowledge of the construction of writing. And then it demands the courage to forget the rules of writing when such forgetting is necessary.

What an author with all of these skills produces depends on his personality and interests, because such people tend to be true individuals. And for that matter what a book is will depend on what problem is being approached. One book might be quite different from another book by the very same author. Good authors project themselves and their interests in many different ways.

If one author were to become interested in a number of modern problems, and if, by some miracle of time, he were able to complete them all in a very short time in our day, in 1970, the results might be quite interesting. Assume the author is a man of fairly liberal persuasions, with a deep interest in young people, with a secure sense of humor and a conviction that things are going to get worse before they get better (a rather casual picture of what is probably a fairly complex person).

In his first book the author takes on the problem of the pressures on young people today. He is gripped by a character, Quentin Fellman, who is a boy beset with pressure problems. Quentin's father—remembering the failures of his own youth as successes and telling about them continually and at some length—wants an all-around athlete and a future salesman. Quentin's mother wants a scholar. Quentin's sister wishes he didn't exist. Quentin's grandparents want him to be quiet. Quentin's teachers wish he would speak up more in class and do a little more work. Quentin's best friend wants him to join the local junior sds group. Quentin's gang has already tried tobacco and is ready for pot. Quentin himself is tired of Boy Scouts,

tired of Sunday School, bored with school, and afraid of a lot of nameless things that seem to hover in every corner. The author sees Quentin and his surroundings and suddenly Quentin takes on life. He becomes a person not only to the author, but to himself. And in his efforts to be himself, to test himself against all of the pressures pushing in on him, he manages to best every single person's demand, without violating himself—only to find himself in a worse mess than he was in before. What the book becomes, almost to the author's surprise, is a funny book. Quentin is a modern Don Quixote in reverse, fighting real problems that seem to demand a whole arsenal of weapons, and conquering with a feeble blow given out of weakness and desperation and very little planning. Quentin's plans seldom work, but his casual parries always succeed. The book is light, deft, and clever; yet it bites deep at the varying attempts to mold young people into a precast form. Humorous books, although they may not always seem real and may even seem overdrawn, can be biting, accurate, and at the same time entertaining. They can deal effectively with modern problems. After all, Hannah Arendt, the modern social and political philosopher, says the surest way to undermine authority is to attack it with laughter.

In a second book, our author approaches the question of whether a young person can contemplate a real future, of war, of the dissolution of society, of the bleakness that confronts us all at times. This time it may not be a character that captures his attention first. Instead, it may be a passage in a book describing life in a small town in the lower Rhineland in the early Fifth Century. Did the young people of that time know the world was falling apart as we know it now? Did they know that the customs, the agricultural methods, the pattern of life they had imported from Rome did not really work where they were? Did they know that these things had to change? This author asks these questions; and reading into the period and the place convinces him that some young people did know, even though problems were not communicated to them daily through newspapers, radios, and TV as our problems are communicated to us today. And so the author writes a book about a boy of that time, a Roman citizen, who sees that the old form of society will no longer always work and that in fact in some ways it has never

worked. His is a tragic story, for his vision is not accepted by the leaders, who do not want to shift the nature of their power, or by the people, who cannot accept a change from the ways that have produced so much good for some. And because change does not come swiftly, destruction of custom and farming methods is precipitated by conquering Germanic tribes, and more is lost than might have been, had people been willing to meet change. Many people die; and the boy dies, too, because in the end he cannot accept, any more than the others, a life completely outside the framework of what he has always known. Have we learned in fifteen hundred years, have we really learned, the author seems to be asking, that life and change are the same? And have we learned that war brings neither peace nor a solution? For the young person who reads and understands, it says, do you know the strength of inertia, the opposition to change that in the end grips us all? What do you really want? What do you really know? Can you build the new within the framework of the old, lest in the destruction of the old you and all you know and believe are lost, too? There are no solutions. Only questions.

For his third book our prolific author moves on to the drug scene. Here, his motivation is a chance encounter with a girl at the end of a bad LSD trip. She is the daughter of a friend, and she is brought home in a dishevelled state by several of her friends, while our author is visiting the family. This has been the girl's first experience with LSD, although she has had pot fairly often. She is lucky in that she is brought home and her family is upset but not condemning. The girl has a good relationship with her family and can talk to them about the experience: she took the LSD because everyone else was doing it. It was something new in an upper-middle-class situation where something new was highly prized and not often forthcoming. Out of this our author determines to write a book that will put the experiences of the girl and her friends into universal perspective, without varying what he writes very much from what really happened, merely changing names and locations. He does not condemn; he merely details the experiences of the girl and the group. He recaptures the entire party and the remembered experiences of any participants who will talk to him, and promises in each case that he will keep the identity of each as carefully hidden as possible. The

result is an honest book about a drug experience. It tells in a general way where the drugs came from, how it all began, and what happened on the good trips as well as the bad. The book is a light show in words, a strobe light dizzying the reader into wondering what is new and what is old, what is true and what is false, what he himself might do and what he might resist doing. The style the author writes in is mod, swiftly shifting from one episode to another, cutting and patterning like a modern movie. The book is almost a psychedelic experience in itself. Yet it is true. It is essentially nonfiction.

From LSD our writer moves on to sex. Here, the more commonly met problem in books these days, that of unwed motherhood, does not catch his attention. Instead the author wonders just how much teenage sex is elaborate bragging and how much is fact. The pregnancies are fact, but what does the pill breed, he wonders. Yet, he is not interested really in doing a high school Kinsey report. He talks to some of the young people he knows; and from what he learns he writes a book of fiction, told in the first person, by two people. The first half of the book gives a girl's story of her experiences with boys (and especially with one boy) over a period of a year. The second half talks of that boy's experiences with the girl, other girls, and even describes an unexpected encounter with another boy during the same year. The girl's account is a diary. The boy's account is told to several friends. The book is a careful realization of the differences in approach and outlook of a boy and a girl who meet, think they are in love, and have a brief affair. The ending for each is a question. Neither feels a real attachment to the other any longer. Neither knows what comes next. And neither is sure there is anything beyond what they have had; yet they see something more in the relationships of others. And each knows he will go on looking for a something that, as far as he knows, may or may not exist. There is no glamour in this book. There is a certain sophistication. There is nothing really sordid. The reader discovers that sex for neither the boy nor the girl is the beginning or the end of anything. It is what the individual makes it at the time and afterward. The book is greeted by some reviewers as being somewhat sensational. But to the teenage

reader, it is not sensational. It is a useful guidebook and an interesting story.

Sex, LSD, and other problems discussed in books for the young are sometimes only a hint of an even deeper problem—one that disquiets even the most self-assured and popular young people—the question of being needed. In a day when machines are replacing people on assembly lines, in billing and accounting offices, in almost every kind of work, when families no longer need the work of their children to survive, and when every place is crowded with other people—all much like you, or perhaps unlike you but capable of filling any role you could fill—what does existence mean? Does it mean more or less than it has ever meant? The author suddenly cannot think any longer in purely objective terms. He is too close to existence himself. He cannot take out a piece of this and hold it up for examination because in our culture these problems are bound up with too many other things. The web is too tight for the author to break his subject loose. Any piece he can create is too large for comfortable viewing. Yet the idea, the problem, stays in the author's mind. He worries at it. It is never wholly gone. Suddenly he is aware of Planet X, the fourth satellite of a medium magnitude in a quiet area of the large Magellanic Cloud. Planet X is a stable planet. It has had exactly the same number of inhabitants for untold centuries. It has a highly developed technology, and there is just enough work to keep everyone doing something. Each person has an assured place. Each person fills his own little round of duties and is content. Consequently, each person is much like every other person. Except one. Canopus has been a problem since birth. He was a mistake—the first mistake in centuries—and he doesn't quite fit in anywhere. Yet even he has been accommodated and is about to be regulated into the general contentment when a wandering spaceship full of pioneers, going from a place in the smaller Magellanic Cloud to a planet in the Milky Way, goes off course and lands on Planet X. The newcomers represent a less well developed technology in many ways. But Planet X has not gone anywhere for a long time. So there are no facilities for spaceship repair. The pioneers are stuck, perhaps for a long time, perhaps forever. They are a problem. They look

different from Xians. They act different. They are different. And what is worse they are different even from one another. Yet the greatest catastrophe of all is that they do not fit into the carefully planned economy of X. At first they are relegated to a single part of the planet. But this is not a long term solution. Canopus becomes friendly with them, explores their problems and the problems of X with them. In the end all benefit. The newcomers learn something of a superior technology, although they too have something to teach. And the Xians gradually find individual pioneers making a place for themselves as individuals. They are a leaven to the life of the planet, not as a group, but as single people, discovering under the overlay of content and sameness in the Xians a potential for stimulating differences that do not diminish this culture but make it stronger. As the author develops his idea, many themes and ideas are woven in and out, but still the frame is removed far enough that the scene may be viewed as a whole. There is excitement, mystery, adventure, and a deep awareness of hidden wonders of the mind. Some readers read the book for the swift-paced story it tells. Others sense in it an approach to the need of all people for variety and especially for individuals who can accept themselves as individuals. A book on race? Perhaps. A book on being needed? For those who see it. A book on birth control? Probably not.

When our author finishes this book, he takes a year off to rest. And he may need it, although there are many things he has not yet done. He has not approached the racial issue directly. This he could do in a school story, in a home story, in a boy against the world story, or in many kinds of nonfiction as well as fiction. He has not really approached the question of communication between generations. He has not touched very much on politics or even on social revolution. These too could be taken up and dealt with in many ways. The author, however, has done a variety of things: he has talked about conformity, social pressure, being needed, sex, drugs, war and peace, and individual realization; he has written humor, fantasy, first person narratives, nonfiction, and historical fiction. And with all of them, he has made an approach to modern problems.

Meanwhile, the overwhelmed editor (we said at the beginning that all of these were done in 1970) is left with the task of reading,

judging, and perhaps publishing them. How does the editor react? What questions does she ask of these books that have come to her in such a flood?

She may ask first: "Is this book really honest?" By this she will mean many things. Has the author been honest with himself? Has he really gotten as deeply into his subject as he can get and come up not with the ideas he planned to come up with, but with the ideas that were really there? Has he given himself scope enough and freedom enough to really create a book that matters? Then she will ask: Has he been honest with his readers? Has he given them the whole truth of what he found, laying bare the good and the bad, the complete and the incomplete for their examination? If in the book about Quentin Fellman and his pressures, for example, the humor and the humorous conclusion simply evade the issue and do not grapple with it, the book is not an honest book, no matter how hard the author may have worked in the writing of it. Finally, the editor must ask if the book will sound honest to the reader. It is possible for an author to be honest with himself and his reader, but to sound less than honest to someone else. The author whose ideas have become somewhat old-fashioned can fall into this category. Young readers cannot believe that anyone could honestly hold such ideas. Authors who try too hard to inject themselves wholly into the younger generation are another group that may not sound honest, though they are. They may seem too eager and too earnest to be believed.

The editor, having determined the honesty of the author, may move on to his degrees of literacy. Being literate today is a very different thing from being literate at the time of Henry James or even Hemingway. Literacy is no longer a matter of complete sentences, of carefully wrought styles, of complex structures, although a literate book of today may have all of these things. Rather, being literate today means writing in a style that recognizably belongs to the subject and to the time about which it is written and for which it is written. Of course this has always been the basis for determining a literate work. But in the past, times did not change so quickly and standards of the literate seemed to be more permanent. Now, there are no set patterns, no real rules, no standards against which a work can be compared. A book's composition, its

sense of unity, its universality, its sense of identity as a work of art, can be judged only by the shadows it casts on the total body of reading an evaluator has behind him and by the stature of the work as it is compared to life itself. A book of fiction is still a small, more or less organized, group of events drawn out of life and held up for closer examination than life itself can allow. But how an author does this these days can change from day to day. The editor, therefore, can have a problem in assessing the literateness of a work. A book may sound strange. It may be strangely presented. It may be different from anything she has ever read. Yet she cannot say it is not well written, not understandable—not until she analyzes how well the narrative flows, how appropriate the language is to the story, how firm the impact of the whole is, how full of life and emotion the contents are, how consistent the author has been in creating his patterns of development in language, style, and content and in subsequently exploring them. In the end, it is the experimental book that is more likely to be truly literate than the one that slavishly follows an old pattern. Yet not all experiments are valid by any means.

However, the book can be honest and it can be literate and still be dull, or miss in some way its potential audience. "Who is going to read this book?" the editor asks next. "Who knows?" she sometimes answers in despair. In a time when twelve-year-olds die of an overdose of heroin and ten-year-olds travel across the country alone by plane to visit friends, who can assess what the audience may be for any one book? Children read better and they read worse than they have ever read before. Some read more and others read less. No book is for every child. But is any one given book for any specific child? This must be determined by the kind of book and the kind of reader it is likely to attract. A story of a motorcycle gang and its adventures and problems—if the author wants to reach similar gangs—will be fast-paced, full of action, short of sentence, and sharp of language. It will, in all probability, not be a long book. The same story written for the young intellectual group aged 12 and 13 would still be full of action and would be fast-paced, but it might be more introspective. It could be longer. It could look a bit harder at the interaction between the gang and the community. The same

book for an even older group—perhaps for a thoughtful but frustrated group of young protesters—might be an almost nightmare-like psychedelic book, with swift flashes of broken insight woven into its pattern. It might be long. It might be short. It might be anything. Each of these three books would be interesting to its potential audience, maybe; each would be a book that seemed to speak of today to its reader. But how can one know if any one book will be any of this? Possibly one senses the tempo of the time and of the reader, and then matches the tempo of the book with that of the reader and the time. Is it in tune? Or perhaps is the tune old enough or offbeat enough to catch attention even if it is not today's beat? It is the totally out-of-tune book, the one that has no beat at all, that will seem dull, that will not be read no matter how honest, no matter how literate. It is the book that says nothing but pretends to say a great deal, or that breaks its beat to lecture or pontificate, or that never decides just what it is, that is likely to be dull and tiresome. The interesting modern problem book knows its area, stays within it, and explores it to the capacity of the audience to comprehend—and perhaps a little beyond. It creates a lure to greater knowing.

There are many things an editor may consider to be too topical to be useful or publishable in a book. It takes nearly a year now, certainly at least eight months from finished manuscript to publication, except in the most unusual of circumstances. A momentary fad of dress or action destined by the past history of similar fads to die in six months, does not belong in a book, not if it dominates the book. The book on such topics would be out-of-date before it was published. The same is true of language. Both fad words and fad behavior date a book terribly, especially for the generation that has just lived through the fad and has cast it aside. If a book is too involved with matters that will not last even long enough to get the book published, or even if a more lasting tale is told in passing language, an editor probably will be forced to send the book back to the author. Material of great immediacy belongs in magazines. The book is not often the vehicle for such material.

Another question that may present itself to an editor is the matter of whether a given manuscript can be successfully produced

as a book. An author of a book on the use of psychedelic drugs may insist that every page in his, perhaps, 224 page book be decorated with the kinds of psychedelic color patterns we have all seen. He feels that these will add a significant dimension to the book. It will also add significantly to the price. He may have conceived a $25 book. Obviously although such a book might attract an audience were it available, it might never be widely available.

And finally, among the important things an editor must consider is the question, "Will it sell?" It is obviously foolish to publish a book no one really wants. But there is more to the question than this. If the book is to be hardbound, not many of the copies are going to be bought by children and young people themselves. The book will be bought by adults—by librarians and teachers primarily—who will make them available to young people. Some of these adults will be buying the book after having seen the book itself; others will buy on the basis of reviews. If the buyer is truly in tune with young people and has seen the book, if the book is indeed a good one and one that young people will value, there is no problem. But many people who buy books do not see the books; many buy by title alone, others by reviews. How will the book sound to them? Some people who buy books are not really in sympathy with the current life styles of the young. Many buyers and sometimes some reviewers fail at times to see what a book holds for its intended readers. And sometimes, a poor book can even come to be more desired by buyers than a good book. There are often many barriers between a book and its audience. The language of a book can be a barrier to buying, even when it is not fad language. Adults are sometimes put off by words that have long been in common use among the young. Adults forget that the use of language changes and that words mean only what people make them mean. What seems offensive to an adult may be almost ignored by a child who hears and uses such language daily. What is true of language is also true of life styles and of attitudes toward people, toward politics, toward social and cultural movements. The ideas of children and young people have been shaped by forces that adults encountered as adults, met and analyzed as adults, from a childhood shaped by quite another kind of life. What may seem normal and wholly acceptable to the young may

be highly irregular to the adult. Sometimes the adult is right; sometimes adult judgment is wrong, but understandably wrong. No book should be altered to meet the standards of adults, when those standards are false or do not apply. But the means of marketing a book, of getting it to children and young people, must be considered before a book is accepted, and the problems it may present must be considered and dealt with so the book may reach the widest possible market. A book, therefore, should not be designed to shock adults if the shock is not essential. A book should be honest and should be true for the young, but it need not flaunt its independence before the adults who may be judging it. This does not mean that editors should never take a chance—every book is a chance. But a book for which legitimate complaints may be registered—a book that has the unconventional not as an integral part of the book but simply to shock —is as bad as a book that seems to offer value but is a simple mouthing of pallid purgatives; neither needs to be published.

Perhaps the ultimate answer to reaching children with children's books lies in paper books. Perhaps problem books should be done immediately in paper and be made widely available. This might even make some fad books possible. But this is more a problem in marketing than in book selection and editing. Nevertheless, it is a question which publisher and editor more and more frequently will be called upon to answer.

It is not the only question, however, that the future holds. The form that books will take is obviously of some importance—paper, hardbound, both—but it is not of enduring importance. The real question is, will books continue to exist or will other media speak more clearly to the young in years to come, especially in the area of contemporary problems? Will television, radio, newspapers (if they survive), magazines, and other more quickly readied media displace the book? Have they already done so for some children? Will tapes, filmstrips, and movies (although they may take as long to prepare as a book) speak more convincingly to generations used to listening and looking at such things, and used to being stimulated by them? Will the group dynamics possible with audio and visual media make them seem more desirable to the young than books which require concentration and a pursuit of ideas alone?

It is very possible that all of these media and others not yet invented may well attract greater and greater numbers of children and young people. But whether the book will be displaced or even diminished depends to a large extent on the society that we are in the process of evolving and the books that are published. If books survive, they will still consist of words printed on some kind of a page or in some other form that can be read. Books may be made a group experience when the words are printed large enough or are projected in such a way that a group can read them together, or even when they are read aloud to a group in the old-fashioned manner; still, this is in many cases not likely to result in reading as we think of it, when we think of the reading of literature. A book is a dialogue between an author and a reader. The author is giving the reader something of what he is, of his view of life, of his discoveries about people and about living; and the reader is bringing himself to the author and commenting on the author's ideas—agreeing with some, disagreeing with others—and perhaps coming to new conclusions within himself, conclusions the author has never foreseen in a reader and the reader had not anticipated. Such reactions are difficult in a group, where group synthesis is more often the aim than individual discovery. Books will continue to exist if we can continue to have a society where the individual is valued for his individuality. Where the author expressing himself as a person is important. And where the reader reacting to the author in his own individual way is accepted and cherished. If we lose these things, we will lose not only literature but that which is best in all art forms.

If we are wise, we will not lose our sense of individuality and replace what we have with a group culture. Our problems now are drugs, sex, the nature of a true school, the right of the individual and the rights of the group, war and peace, employment, and all of the things crowding our daily newspapers. But hanging on the edge, ready to come in are problems that relate to even greater overcrowding than we now know: questions of privacy, questions of the need to be needed in a society where no individual is really needed, problems of how to satisfy a need for risk and adventure in a world grown too small and yet not large enough to offer challenging space travel to all. These are only a few of the problems that are now

coming close, that will come closer, and that will bring others as yet unseen crowding on their backs. Many of these problems will push us toward a group-oriented culture, one where the individual is less than the state, less than the body of which he is a part. But such a society can be stagnant, stultifying and eventually repressive. It is the individual who discovers the means of change, sometimes many individuals working together, but each essentially functioning as an individual.

Perhaps the book, especially the book that looks at the problems of the young, and the movement of society will complement each other. If the book survives it will survive for those who need to be people in their own bodies, people who belong to themselves; for them the book will continue to offer solutions. For those who seek information and expression dealing with questions and problems in ways that are not in the mainstream of current thinking but that take a long view, the book is likely to remain. For those who seek answers from the past as well as the present, books may continue to be of value. If such continue to exist in the future, the book may also continue to exist. And together they may make the continued worth of the individual as an individual apparent.

Both will continue to exist, in the area in which we are speaking, in books that deal with contemporary problems if authors continue to be honest in what they present, if they do not gloss over problems, but if at the same time they do not unduly seek to shock and horrify at the expense of the truth as a whole; if they use language well in ways that speak to the young people of the day without simply using such language as a gloss to cover an inadequacy of thought; if young people continue to find in books ideas that help them think about themselves without feeling that the book is preaching at them or attempting to pattern their lives.

Books will continue to explore problems if editors keep up enough with the times to know what is modern and good, if they have courage enough to publish the things that may work no matter how chancy it may seem, if publishers allow editors to do this, and if editors continue to seek for better and better ways of getting the book to its audience.

Finally, books will continue to exist if those adults who see

children and young people every day—teachers and librarians and parents and others—have courage enough to buy and give to young people the books that seem geared to their problems; if adults make books seem exciting and worthwhile to young people—not just a reading lesson but an excursion into the mind of an author—if adults themselves read and share the riches of their reading with all the children they know.

We all know the problems of our day. None of us knows the solutions to these problems. We can search for answers. But in the end the answers to today's problems and tomorrow's problems will come from those children and young people whose minds are open, whose thoughts can break old patterns and find new ones. It is books, at least in part, that may make this possible.

Outlooks and Insights

LLOYD ALEXANDER
Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania

WE KNOW ABOUT compulsive smokers—and compulsive drinkers and gamblers. But there are also compulsive readers. I confess to being one of them. It is a habit of long standing, happily altogether incurable. Lacking anything more literary, I'm quite willing to read labels on jars of peanut butter and boxes of detergent. Bread wrappers are as good as a course in organic chemistry. I've found both comfort and entertainment in a bottle of Alka-Seltzer. I only wish a Ralph Nader of the literary profession would require a list of the ingredients in some of our popular novels; those labels would be fascinating.

Not long ago, I enjoyed a fabulous adventure with a bottle of chutney. The ingredients alone are words to conjure with: sultana raisins, mangoes, tamarinds. The word *chutney,* by the way, comes from the Hindu *chatni,* a spicy relish (I also read dictionaries). The rest of the label states: "Genuine Major Grey's Bengal Chutney."

Now, right away, we sense an element of mystery. Genuine chutney? Or a genuine Major Grey?

Is there perhaps a false chutney to be fobbed off on the innocent and unsuspecting? Worse, a false Major Grey, an impostor? And who, indeed, is Major Grey, to begin with? I see him in different roles: a pukkah-sahib drinking gin and quinine water from his pith helmet; or gradually deteriorating out in the upland stations east of Suez; or defending the Khyber pass singlehanded. But whatever set him to the humble task of chutney-making? Cashiered out of the army? Unjustly? Was he innocent of all charges? Or horribly guilty?

As for Bengal: the mind leaps to the lives of a Bengal lancer, Kim, Kipling, Clive of India, the Black Hole of Calcutta (maybe Oh, Calcutta?), the Sepoy Mutiny, the decline of the British Raj, Gandhi, Nehru and nehru jackets, E. M. Forster, Ravi Shankar—truly a spicy

relish, a very heady mixture. There's more to chutney than we might think, if we let ourselves read between the lines.

For a good part of my boyhood, the consumption of food and the consumption of books were inseparable. I preferred reading to eating, but absolute Nirvana was doing both at the same time. Food for thought? Yes, but in the literal sense, too. If any eatables or drinkables were mentioned in the book I was reading, I had to get hold of them.

If you think back over the books you loved in childhood, you can imagine this involved some strange items of diet. Venison, unfortunately, was obtainable more easily (and cheaper) in Sherwood Forest than Philadelphia. I settled for Salisbury steak; and gingerale instead of the brown October variety. My parents didn't object to my eating apples along with Jim Hawkins in the barrel; they drew the line at Long John Silver's rum. I had to find out about that later.

I don't mean to load weight-watchers with added calories, even fictional ones. My point is not culinary, but literary: the impact of books on children. As adults, we can easily forget really how profound that impact can be. The right child plus the right book or poem plus the right moment is a formula more generative than the enchanting "E equals MC squared." A feeling perhaps never to be recaptured in later life in quite the same way.

I'm thinking of some good friends in Oxon Hill, Maryland: the CRABS. Literary, not crustaceous; an acronym for a reading group called Children Raving About Books. The title isn't exaggerated. These boys and girls are superbly turned on and tuned in to reading. Regrettably, so far I haven't heard of any organized ARABS or GURABS —adults or grown-ups raving about books. As adults, I suppose it's more seemly to rave in private.

This may seem a work of supererogation, extolling the value of books to the International Reading Association. It might be more useful to address the SWELLS—Sworn Worst Enemies of Libraries and Literature. Thankfully, there is no such organization, though I suppose there might be potential members, including even a few writers.

But I think it would be safe to say that we all agree: books are

one of our more constructive inventions; and reading one human pleasure that isn't illegal, immoral, or fattening.

Still, the outlook for literature isn't altogether cheerful. We have to face the uneasy question: is literature biodegradable? Are bookworms becoming extinct, along with other flora and fauna; decimated not by DDT, but by TV, AV, and film? Is it possible that literature, one of our prime artistic media, is becoming a quaint, archaic pursuit, like bowling on the green? Are readers dwindling to a forlorn band of harmless eccentrics, hung up on books like Mr. Dick with King Charles's head?

What about writers? I remember when I made up my mind to be one and finally revealed this momentous decision to my family. I had never seen my father turn green before. Not that he considered my ambition reprehensible. Writers were not all bad. He just didn't want one moving into the neighborhood. Actually, he wasn't worried about what I might do to literature, but what literature might do to me. He warned me it was an occupation fraught with misery, suffering, disappointment, and the ultimate ignominy of becoming a bad credit risk. As things turned out, of course, he was quite right. I persisted, nevertheless, and went on to write the Great American Novel. Several, in fact. Luckily, all unpublished.

My impression today, however, is that a great many creative young people don't want to write the Great American Novel (publishers should be grateful) and in fact don't want to write novels at all. Considering the benefits of a life devoted to literature, this shows keen intelligence on their part.

On the other hand, they do want to make films. A recent article says flatly that film has become the only narrative form that matters. And this, the lead paragraph in a recent book review: "There is certainly reason to fear for the future of literature in print. As an art form, the novel lacks immediacy and relevance, and the most important poets of today are working in film."

Very sweeping statements. One might answer that the fault is not in the limitations of the novel but of the novelists. Still, it's enough to make a writer wonder if he should swap his quill pen for a 16-mm Bolex. Or go back to reading labels on chutney bottles.

Admitting a certain bias in favor of books, I still don't believe that film is the only narrative form that matters. What is true, surely, is that film has become—or at least is in the way of becoming—a major art form, a valid, unique form, superb in its own right.

There's no need to be tacky and say that a large number of films are based on books. More and more, I think there will be original, uniquely cinematic sources. Nor will I be downright contentious and say that some of the most widely admired films, on close examination, offer considerably less than meets the eye. Like many of our current cultural ornaments, their acclaim has more to do with fashion than excellence.

However used or abused, film has given us many masterpieces and promises many more. The point is not to minimize the importance of film, but to welcome it. The vitality of art is its capacity for infinite expansion. One form doesn't preclude another any more than the existence of Mozart makes the existence of Bach superfluous.

On the contrary. I think the generative attitude in art must be a kind of encompassment that can embrace Lascaux cave paintings and Moog synthesizers. Art suffers, and we suffer in consequence, only when it becomes excluding instead of including; when we say that because a certain form is good, everything else automatically becomes useless; that because something is new it is therefore excellent, and because something is old it is therefore old-fashioned. And vice versa.

What concerns me is this tendency to think in terms of either/or —which can lead to impoverishment, instead of both/and—which can lead to enrichment.

Perhaps, in our exuberant pursuit of "Now" we might have gone off on something of a Snark-hunt, forgetting that "Now" is an elusive quarry; that "Now" includes an accumulation of "Thens" and an implication of "Yet-to-be." "Now" is an active, interactive process, not a series of discontinuous moments, each frozen in a block of transparent Lucite.

In any case, the film *auteur* isn't Attila the Hun, played by Antonioni, battering the library gates. We should not feel threatened by film as a competitive *medium*, one that's guaranteed to transform readers into popcorn eaters. Nor should we feel threatened by TV as

a competitive *medium*. Actually, aside from putting us in a state of incipient paranoia over the staying power of deodorants and mouthwash, and the brightness of our laundry, TV—accidentally, perhaps—has produced a very knowledgeable audience for writers. Young people know more than they ever did in the sense of having more data and more hard information, however poorly processed—certainly, thanks to new educational methods, but thanks also to television. As a result, writers, especially writers of children's books, can deal with subjects no one would have dared to touch a few years ago and can deal with them on a much higher level of maturity.

We can, however, justifiably feel threatened by stupid movies, by stupid television. And stupid books, too, for the matter of that, by anything that tends to dull our sensitivities and diminish our humanity instead of enlarging it.

We can be reasonably certain that books are going to be around for some time yet. No less an oracle than Marshal McLuhan has actually come out and said that books are unique and will persist. I derived a great deal of consolation when I first heard his statement. But McLuhan, as a modern oracle, can be just as devious and ambiguous as his Delphic predecessor. He says books will persist. He didn't mention anything about readers.

Even the Bible, predating McLuhan by some while, begs the question: "Of the making of many books there is no end," Ecclesiastes tells us. But what about the making of many readers?

The making—or unmaking—of readers is of intense, even selfish, concern to writers. Art isn't created in a vacuum; nor does it function in a vacuum. A painting is colorless without a human eye to see it; music is only silence without a human ear. Without an intelligent, receptive—and perceptive—reader, a book is no more than peculiar-looking marks on sheets of paper.

We have so many new problems it's a relief to turn to an old one. The problem of developing responsive readers is old enough to qualify as antique.

At first glance, it shouldn't be a problem at all. The rewards of reading are so great that learning how to gain them should be worth all the difficulties. This applies to adults as well as children. As T. H. White says:

> The best thing for being sad is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewer of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then—to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting.

The whole educational process can and should be a superb experience. It doesn't always come out that way. One prize example is the writer of this article who was not, to say the least, a joyful student. I admit I wasn't exactly a joyful young boy in any circumstances, but which is cause and which is effect I can't guess.

The only times when I might wish myself back in a classroom have been times when I've had the opportunity to visit schools around the country. Most of them aren't at all like the dungeons of my own school days. Some are worse. But generally, so far, I haven't seen any racks or thumbscrews, unless they were cleverly disguised as AV equipment. Even the gymnasiums aren't quite as gamey as I remember mine.

In my school, "Teachers' Meeting" was a code word for mayhem. I was convinced that teachers throughout the district were gathering to plot ways of destroying the entire fifth grade without a trace. Parents' Night filled me with the apprehensiveness of a Huguenot on the eve of Saint Bartholomew's Massacre.

I still count on my fingers, but if I were back in school today, maybe I could even pass geometry and algebra. Exciting things are happening in education (I mean that more in the curricular sense than locking the principal in the utility closet, although that's a pretty exciting idea, too). I've been reading, for one example, about "process curricula," ways to let the student use his basic mental capacities, which he already has, applied to any subject. It will be fascinating to see how this develops.

Exciting things are happening outside the formal academic institutions—the street schools and free universities. Even Philadel-

phia, which has never claimed to be the Athens of the East, has ventured into a number of experimental programs.

We have magnificent methods for teaching the sciences. And yet, when it comes to literature the old stumbling block is still there. Recently, I've had some tremendously interesting experiences in education, as author-in-residence at Temple University. Actually, I'm the one being educated, since I'm working with a superb teacher, Dr. Tony Amato. I've also found out that the academic world has almost as many problems as the literary world. In one of the graduate seminars, we've talked at great length about how to introduce literature to young people (or how to introduce young people to literature) without heavy casualties on both sides.

During one meeting we had a very heavy session on criteria. The same way that most conversations tend to drift toward sex, politics, and religion, teacher's conversations tend to drift toward criteria (in addition, of course, to the aforementioned subjects). So, we were trying to determine the absolute hardcore, irreducible, infallible criteria for evaluating books. We were going along just fine until someone raised the question: what if a book meets all these criteria and the reader still doesn't like it? Luckily, the class ended at that point.

But somehow it reminded me of the story about the mother whose son despised kreplach. He'd go into tantrums and convulsions whenever she served it. In despair, she consulted a famous child psychologist, who advised her to follow a very logical, reasonable plan: to show the boy every step in making kreplach. Next day, she did this. The boy watched with great interest and enjoyment as she mixed the flour, rolled out the dough, cut it into squares, put in the filling. She turned down one corner, then folded over another—everything was fine. But as soon as she folded over the last corner, the boy suddenly screamed in horror: "It's kreplach!"

So it's possible, I suppose, for a book to meet a number of external criteria and still fail as a result of some indefinable inner inadequacy. Or maybe the approach is through criteria not for books but for readers.

I can say right now: I don't know the answer. If I did, I'd be the first to tell you. Even if it weren't the right answer, I'd tell you

anyway. This is one of the delights of being an author-in-residence. It's rather like being a visiting uncle, who has a marvelous time with his nephews and nieces, then goes off leaving the parents to cope with attacks of whooping cough, mending socks, and blackmailing the kids to straighten up the mess in their rooms.

We have excellent methods in teaching reading skills; amazing resources and amazing resourcefulness. And obviously, reading skill is essential before we can even think about really approaching literature. This applies to any field. A doctor can be a splendid, well-adjusted fellow with a charming personality; but if he's going to take out my appendix, I'd prefer competence to charisma.

I suppose one might say that we can't compare proficiency in technical skills with proficiency in the humanities. I think we can. Sloppy thinking is sloppy thinking, studying logarithms or literature.

However, even though we recognize the need for reading skills, sometimes we rely on highly structured programs perhaps a little too much, as if they were magic formulae guaranteed to work every time. It's very easy to let ourselves be caught up in methodologies—in external procedures—and miss the heart of the matter.

The French writer, Jacques Prévert, whom we know best for his film *The Children of Paradise,* says something close to this in one of his poems. An artist—a painter of the realistic school—sits down to paint a still life, an apple on a plate. But he becomes absorbed, almost hypnotized by his subject and finally, as Prévert tells

> the befuddled painter loses sight of his model
> and goes to sleep
> then Picasso, happening to pass by,
> sees the apple and the plate and the sleeping painter
> What a strange idea to paint an apple
> says Picasso
> and Picasso eats the apple
> and the apple says Thank You
> and Picasso breaks the plate
> and goes away smiling
> and the painter torn out of his dreams
> like a tooth
> finds himself alone before his unfinished canvas
> and in the midst of the broken plate
> the terrifying seeds of reality.

Surely, reading skills are a means to the inner experience of literature. What can lead us astray, perhaps, is looking for a single method, a single answer, when there are hundreds; thousands, and more; as many possible answers as there are students and teachers. Finding the right answer for the right student is ultimately a matter of our own judgment, perception, discernment. An individual responds to an individual need.

Despite overcrowded classrooms, the teacher-student relationship essentially is one-to-one: what the individual teacher can give, what the individual student can gain.

The Greeks of classical antiquity had an interesting approach to education. The teaching of basic skills was entrusted usually to humble individuals, often slaves, overworked, underpaid (I'm talking about classical antiquity, things are different, of course, today). But the deeper understanding of ideals, personal attitudes, philosophy of life, was the responsibility of men of great intellectual powers and perceptions, concerned with ideas instead of the incidentals of learning.

We still persist in this differentiation to some extent, when we speak of "elementary" and "higher" education. But for all their intelligence, the Greeks overlooked an important point. We can differentiate on the basis of subject matter; the personal effects of the educational experience in general are much the same. Even at the most elementary levels of education, we can't underestimate the impact of one human personality on another. Unmeasurable, immeasurable. It's nevertheless one fragment, one tessera, however large or small, that goes into the mosaic of our lives.

Sandbox One offers as many opportunities for a teacher to help a child grow as the most advanced seminar in symbolic logic. Perhaps, in a way, even more. So I don't think we can underestimate the importance and influence of teachers, librarians, everyone in education, at every level, at every encounter, in classroom or library. Or even the gymnasium.

Our teaching devices are still only inanimate objects to help us achieve living human goals. We still have the most complex, most highly sensitive audiovisual system ever devised, right in our heads. Teaching and learning are still highly personal matters.

So is reading. So is writing, although I wasn't entirely convinced

of that when I was a boy. In those days, the Readers Digest vocabulary-builders hadn't given me the word "sadistic," but I was convinced that the writers we studied in school (as opposed to the books I read on my own) were in league with the teachers, dedicated, utterly committed to the prime objective of total anesthesia.

Eventually, I realized this wasn't true. No writer, unless absolutely demented, wants to numb his readers. Most go to great lengths to avoid it, some succeeding better than others. But nobody wants to be dull on purpose. Not even writers disguised as guest speakers.

Educators don't want to bore people, either. Just the opposite. The movements in education today are directed toward the excitement and stimulation of learning. There are some grisly examples —far too many, even one would be too many—of dull schools, irrelevant curricula, and insensitive teachers. Nicholas Nickleby would be right at home in some of the Dotheboys Halls of our inner cities. But the temper of the times—as long as the times are allowed to have a temper—is at work in the classrooms; educational styles are changing along with life styles, and we have options and alternatives we never had before.

Nevertheless, many of these alternatives are based on excellence of equipment instead of personal insight. In addition to giving us many imaginative ways of eliminating each other, our technology has given us outstanding pedagogical hardware. But there's a point beyond which technology can't go. It can take us to the moon. Only Jonathan Swift can take us on Gulliver's Travels.

At the risk of being zapped by a lethal shower of electrons, I must say I don't really believe the medium is the message. The medium is the message only when the message itself is so trivial that it's hardly worth saying in the first place. For example, an invitation to visit Marlboro Country is attractive more through the way it's offered than what we find once we're there. Or, in theatre and film, nakedness of body is often used to clothe poverty of spirit.

A Persian fable tells that a wise man, the wonder of his age, taught his disciples from a limitless store of wisdom. He told them it all came from a huge book which he would allow no one to open. When he died, his students naturally ran to get hold of that book, opened it—and found the pages blank. Only on the last page they

read the inscription: When you truly understand the difference between the container and the content, then will you have wisdom.

Today, I think we must have insight into the difference between the container and the content. The difference between legalism and justice. Between rhetoric and communication. When our military geniuses talk about "defoliation" instead of "burning down trees"—or when the CIA refers to "termination with extreme prejudice" when they mean killing off one of their agents—these are more than semantic subtleties. It's the difference between language to express truth and verbiage that insulates us, and puts us at a more comfortable remove from uncomfortable realities.

We must have insight into the difference between method and matter. Between books and literature.

It's easy to come out in favor of literature; rather like coming out in favor of Truth, Beauty, Motherhood, or even Zero Population Growth. But literature demands more than lip service. And it offers more than imaginary rewards.

In Philadelphia during Earth Week, Dr. Paul Ehrlich pointed out that the world has reached such a state of crisis that, ironically, the only realistic solutions are those we have dismissed in the past as being idealistic. This same belief in the workable reality of human ideals is at the core of our greatest works of art.

Art has the power to move us, to change us, to add to our human dimension. But this power can work only if we are willing to be moved and changed. Ultimately the great works of literature ask us to be more than readers. They ask us to be passionate and compassionate human beings. This is a difficult and demanding request. Perhaps an impossible one. We can't know until we've tried. But if we really believe in literature, can we settle for anything less?

Lloyd Alexander: The Man and His Books for Children

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FROM 1964 through 1968 Lloyd Alexander published five books detailing the chronicles of Prydain: *The Book of Three* (1964), *The Black Cauldron* (1965), *The Castle of Llyr* (1966), *Taran Wanderer* (1967), and *The High King* (1968). The first three books were designated Notable Books by the American Library Association; the second was a runner-up for and the fifth a winner of the Newbery Award. Too few teachers, however, have read the complete series or known the background and convictions of the author of one of the most talked-about fantasies in the last decade.

Lloyd Alexander is a slight, wispy man. He appears to be rather somber, shy, sensitive, and ascetic, though he speaks frankly. Ann Durrell, editor of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, publisher of his eight children's books, says (*12*) that he bears a resemblance to Hans Christian Andersen and also is like one of his story characters, as Robert Burch once suggested. She sees in him the Fflewddur Fflam of Evaline Ness' drawings and the pessimistic Gwystyl and Prince Gwydion as described in his writings. While detecting all the characters in him, she considers him most like the enchanter, Dallben.*

Mr. Alexander was born in Philadelphia in 1924. At fifteen he decided to be a poet, to the distress of his father who insisted on the need also for some practical work. He read a great deal. As a young child, on Saturday night he was treated to window shopping and looked forward to the children's books in a stationery store. It was here that he first saw a copy of *King Arthur and His Knights,* his start in reading hero tales, and turned even his play into legend-

* Some of the names in the Prydain volumes seem difficult to pronounce. Mr. Alexander suggests that the reader start slowly at the beginning and say a name naturally as it develops.

touched games. Since his grades were not spectacular and his family could not afford college expenses, on graduation he became a bank messenger boy, a job considered by him a catastrophe. Later he attended Lafayette College but quit at the end of a term.

Thinking adventure might help him in writing, he joined the army and was sent to Texas. Here "in discouraging succession" his duties involved those of artilleryman, cymbal player in a band, harmonium player at the chapel, and first aid man. Eventually, assigned to military intelligence, he was moved with his battalion to Wales to be outfitted for combat (*15*). Wales entranced him.

In France he became a translator-interpreter and ended the war in Paris with counterintelligence. It was in Paris where he met and married Janine. Discharged from the army, he attended the University of Paris, but, homesick, felt the need for familiar surroundings if he were to write. With his wife he returned to Philadelphia, where, before and after work, he wrote three novels, none of which was accepted for publication. During the day his work was, in turn, that of cartoonist, piano player, "advertising writer, layout artist for a printer, and associate editor for an industrial magazine." For seven years he wrote without success in a "stubborn kind of hopeless hopefulness," until finally he was able to look back with humor on his trials (*15*). His fourth attempt at a novel was published.

He learned to write from what he knew. His five cats became part of his books. His wife's reactions to American customs and the English language intrigued him, and music, which has always been important to him, was drawn upon. He is first violinist in an amateur chamber music group on Sundays and also plays the piano and guitar. An old Welsh harp, whose strings keep breaking unexpectedly, now stands on his mantelpiece. As his readers know, it has special significance in *The Truthful Harp*.

At first his writing was for adults. He wrote for such magazines as *Harper's Bazaar, McCall's,* and *Contemporary Poetry* (*14*). Besides translating the work of some French writers, he published *Border Hawk: August Bondi; My Love Affair with Music; My Five Tigers; Fifty Years in the Doghouse; The Flagship Hope; And Let the Credit Go;* and, with Louis J. Camuti, *Park Avenue Vet.* Turning to children's books, he has written *Time Cat,* the five volumes of the Prydain

series, and two books for young children, *Coll and His White Pig* and *The Truthful Harp,* which also have their settings in Prydain.

Both Mr. Alexander and Miss Durrell have told how Prydain evolved. Mr. Alexander was working on a book called *Time Cat,* a fantasy about Gareth, a black cat, and a boy Jason who go back into nine periods of history from Egypt in 2700 B.C. to America in 1775. The sole element of fantasy was the cat taking Jason into history, but the episodes were based on research. The original plan called for an adventure in Wales (*5*) but, in searching for data, Mr. Alexander found himself involved in heroic legends, which had always attracted him. He changed the Welsh episode to an Irish one, with the thought of further exploration. His research, then, became a matter of checking into records for people's regard for cats during the ages and into historical details, such as Ichigo really being Emperor of Japan and kittens being dressed in royal kimonos, facts which were used in *Time Cat.*

His childhood preoccupation with the Arthurian legend had led him to the *Mabinogion,* a collection of medieval Welsh stories which were found in two manuscripts, about 1300 to 1425 (*10*). The first four tales, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi,* concerned the life of Prince Gwri, later called Pryderi. These and others of the stories contained Welsh traditions about King Arthur, whose legends in their most archaic form depend much upon Welsh mythology. (In fact, it is thought that first mention of Arthur in any literature may have been in a Welsh poem about 600.) Mr. Alexander became so absorbed that he planned to write a fantasy based on some tales of the *Mabinogion.* As he delved deeply, he collected boxes of information on file cards, even doing a genealogy of mythological heroes (*5*). His plan, however, was finally modified, and he turned more to invention, though greatly influenced by his research. For example, he found pigs to be sacred in ancient Wales, and drew upon the knowledge for Hen Wen; the Welsh Hades was Annuvin, Land of Death, a title which he used; and Gwydion, Arawn, Coll, Dallben, and others appeared in the myths and were characters in his material.

The author submitted to Ann Durrell his proposal to do three books based upon the *Mabinogion,* which she termed the "most confusing document" she ever tried to read. She asked him to have a

boy and girl of his own creation in the books as a link for the reader (*11*). Seeing his attempts as being comparable to other hero cycles, she judged, in a very practical way, that his work might be a classic if he were successful, but, if not, it would be "awfully good reading and very prestigious." Since fantasy has generally seemed to be a British function, there was little competition in this country, and the time appeared right since child psychologists were now accepting such writing.

Two particular problems arose in the publishing: a title and illustrations. Nonny Hogrogian is credited with finding the title: the tentative name, *The Battle of the Trees,* became *The Book of Three.* Miss Hogrogian, as Holt's art director, was to do unusual design and Evaline Ness, to paint the "brilliant, tapestry-like jacket." Understandably, Mr. Alexander thought that a reader should use his imagination to picture events rather than be limited by an artist's conception.

Four books were written, *The High King* last, but Miss Durrell felt the need for a firm establishment of the "deeper and more human" themes. Therefore, *Taran Wanderer* appeared, in which the hero Taran, now not an Assistant Pig-Keeper but a Wanderer, grows into manhood through his own inner resources. Thus *The High King* came as fifth volume. In commenting that "all is not dreams," the editor says (*11*): "The magic may have passed from the earth, but the tapestry of the Fates, on which each man writes his own story, is given into his own keeping."

In speaking of his work, Lloyd Alexander states that human beings are what his books are all about. His epic focuses on the quest of a hero searching for manhood and on the struggle between evil and good in Prydain. Various themes develop from the story line, perhaps the strongest being the question of who Taran really is, a thread that runs through all the books. Each book was planned, though, to stand alone. The author hoped (*4*) that each would have its tone and mood "in the same way that a single musical composition has its *allegro* and *andante* movements, its lyrical passages as well [as] its scherzos." That he succeeded in this is quickly evident as one recalls the dark, somber effect of *The Black Cauldron* and the romantic, "bittersweet" atmosphere of *The Castle of Llyr.*

Of the two books for young children, *Coll and His White Pig* appeared in 1965, based on an incident from *The Book of Three.* Coll had settled on a farm but had to take up adventure again when his pig Hen Wen of the oracular powers was stolen by the Lord of the Land of Death. The exciting story is illustrated in handsome, multicolored paintings by Evaline Ness. *The Truthful Harp* was published in 1967 and is particularly delightful in its originality and humor. Bumbling, boastful King Fflewddur Fflam failed his examination as a bard but in pity the Chief Bard of the High Council gave him a special harp, whose strings stretched and broke as the king stretched the truth. The story is set up in the old mythical technique. While it possesses didacticism, for Fflam grows in disciplining himself and his tongue, the wording is amusing and is splendidly illustrated by Evaline Ness' comic interpretations. [An interesting note explains (*1*) that Miss Ness used Japanese bamboo pen and ink to combine drawing and printmaking for the book's red, black, and gray-green pictures. She rolled paint on "nailheads, bunched string, and many other textures and transferred the textures to paper. She then combined various of the reproduced textures for individual illustrations and finished by drawing and painting in details."]

Mr. Alexander repeatedly has said that Prydain is, in truth, part Wales but (*8*) "more as it never was. . . . While it grew from Welsh legend, it has broadened into my attempt to make a land of fantasy relevant to a world of reality." In its chronicles he sees as much of his own life as of the legends, "half-forgotten, half-remembered." Originally he thought of his attempts as being similar to what T. H. White tried in using the Arthurian legend in *The Once and Future King.* Some critics, unfortunately, have made comparison with Tolkien's writing, though Tolkien devised and invented his own myths. One day when Ann Durrell was discussing some critics' reactions in terms of the Tolkien fantasy, this, she reports (*11*), was Mr. Alexander's placid comment: "Cheer up. It's a real compliment —they *might* have said I was imitating Edgar Rice Burroughs." Generally, reviews of the Prydain series have been highly favorable, with Gerhardt (*13*) calling it "the strongest high fantasy written for children in our times" and Maples (*16*) terming the total creation "a remarkable achievement," with riches for all ages.

The modesty, humility, and humor of Mr. Alexander are obvious in both his writing and speaking. He has stated (*15*) humbly:

> If Wales gave me a glimpse of Prydain, I think Prydain gave me a glimpse of what every writer must do: to say, each in his own way, what is deepest in his heart. If writers learn more from their books than do readers, perhaps I may have begun to learn.

In his Newbery acceptance speech, the author spoke (*2*) of the sense of loss at finishing the work, but also of the "more than equal gain" to have created something and to have felt for the moment how to be a writer. He said: "Now, perhaps, I can start being one." Commenting on the "kinship in the pursuit of excellence" among those concerned with children's literature, he concluded that "where children are concerned it's not what we keep that matters. It's what we hope to give."

In fantasy he sees the same issues as appear in real life: war, inhumanity, intolerance, and death, and also mercy, compassion, and love. Fantasy, he believes, involves the real world and people and ourselves, because it helps in the understanding of that world through giving us a "fresh way of seeing and reacting." [This alliance with reality helps verify Eleanor Cameron's contention (*9*) that great writers of fantasy for children do not, as sometimes is charged, live themselves in a world of fantasy and of their own immaturity.] He has enumerated (*7*) many values of fantasy, some of which he perceives as the suspension of disbelief and exuberance unlike great moments of realistic literature ("realism walks where fantasy dances"); the strong emotional power and vividness of fantasy; the capacity to believe and to value the worthwhile; and the hopeful dreaming that fantasy promises. Of all the values he views hope, "an essential thread in the fabric of all fantasies," as one of the most precious since fantasy infers that we shall surpass hardships and despair. In fact, he maintains (*6*), fantasy's "true subject is the human condition." A deliberate creation, as opposed to fairytales, fantasy shows the world as it is and as it might be, and reflects reality and truth as each of us tries to judge it, though interpretations may vary.

The writer of fantasy, according to Mr. Alexander (*5*), is free to set up his own ground rules; but he as a hardheaded realist must

then be bound by them. Logical happenings, consistent details, the very essence of a character, and plausibility are significant—all underneath the gossamer, as "solid as prestressed concrete." As for humor, which is part of the Prydain cycle, Mr. Alexander believes (*3*) that our maturity has something to do with what we find funny, that we develop a sense of laughter. Humor "deals with humanity"; it is "laughter of the heart." High humor or comedy is "rich enough for different generations to discover in it their own relevancies." Laughter can help us face life, he affirms. So can fantasy.

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LITERATURE IN ACTION

Strategies for Improving Interest and Appreciation in Literature

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IF WE TEACH A CHILD to read, yet develop not the taste for reading, all our teaching is for naught. We shall have produced a nation of "illiterate literates"—those who know how to read, but do not read. The major purpose for teaching children to read is to help them become readers who readily turn to books for information and enjoyment. Nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, Sir John Herschel in an address at the opening of a library at Eton said

> Give a man a taste for reading and the means of gratifying it, and you cannot fail to make him a happy, as well as a better man. You place him in contact with the best minds in every period of history, with the wisest and the wittiest, the tenderest and the bravest, those who really adorned humanity. You make him a citizen of all nations and a contemporary of all ages.

Developing interest and appreciation in literature are not the same things, although they are mutually supportive. Interest in reading is developed through the opportunity for *wide reading*, for listening to many stories, through exposure to many books. Appreciation for literature requires knowledge and understanding of fine writing and grows out of the opportunity for reading *in depth*. A child may develop an interest in books independently, whereas the appreciative reader is the informed reader. Discrimination is developed gradually over a period of time; it requires sensitivity to the idea of the book, and sensitivity to the means of expressing that idea. While enthusiasm and interest in good books may be caught, appreciation and discrimination are almost always taught. At the same time we cannot develop appreciative readers until we have captured their interest in reading; and hopefully, appreciation for literature should increase interest. Someone has said you do not enjoy a poem until you understand it—you cannot understand it if

you do not enjoy it. Obviously, while interest and appreciation are different in kind and degree, they are closely interrelated and interdependent.

The Reading Environment

How then do we develop this taste for reading; how do we create an interest in books? First we begin very early to make books a natural part of the child's surroundings. Before a child can talk, he should be read to and exposed to good books. While I do not agree with the undue emphasis that is placed upon teaching children the alphabet and how to count on the TV program "Sesame Street," I do commend them for the selection of books that they read to children. For many boys and girls who come from bookless homes, this will be their first exposure to stories and nursery rhymes.

When the child is old enough to come to school, he should enter an environment that invites reading. While central libraries in every elementary school are an absolute necessity, every classroom should have a changing library of two hundred or more books. Many of these could and should be paperback, for paperbacks have a very special appeal for some children. Hopefully, the day will come when each classroom is equipped with a listening center where children may listen to a recording of a book at the same time they read it. Older boys and girls should have an opportunity to listen to various readings of poems or interviews with authors. Films and filmstrips should also be a part of this reading environment since children may come to an appreciation of literature through a variety of media. The private ownership of books can be encouraged through book clubs and school bookstores of paperbacks. Research studies consistently point up the importance of the accessibility of books. If good reading material is constantly available, children will read.

Significant Adult Models

A few children discover books by themselves; in most instances a parent, teacher, or librarian has served as the catalyst for bringing books and children together. As children grow up seeing significant

adults as readers, they become readers. Show me a teacher who is enthusiastic about children's books, and I will show you a class of children who enjoy reading. Invariably, the teacher who reads, who knows books, and who shares her enthusiasm with her students will inspire a love of reading.

Teacher education must assume the responsibility for producing informed, enthusiastic teachers. Much needs to be done to improve the teaching of children's literature at both the preservice, inservice, and graduate levels of education. There is much to be learned in the field of children's literature. Students develop real respect for the quality of writing and illustrating in children's books. Since nearly 3,000 children's books are published each year, inservice and graduate courses in children's literature are greatly needed. If a teacher hasn't taken a refresher course in this field in the past ten years, she may have missed 30,000 books!

Reading to Children

The enthusiastic teacher knows that one of the best ways to create interest in books is to read to children every day. Children should hear many stories before they are expected to read. As they discover that books can produce enjoyment, they gradually develop a purpose for learning to read. Even boys and girls in the middle grades should have a regular story hour. For this is the time their teacher reads the books "too good to miss," or introduces them to several books by just reading enough to capture their interest, or provides depth and balance in their literature program by reading a satire such as Jean Merrill's *The Pushcart War* when many of the students are engrossed in reading sports stories.

Recently, I taught an inservice course in an inner-city school. After I had suggested that each teacher read aloud to her children regardless of grade level, a sixth grade teacher told me that he couldn't read aloud to his children, that they wouldn't listen. I challenged this statement and the next thing I knew, I had agreed to go in and read to them myself. After worrying all the next week about what I would read to them, I selected *Stevie* by John Steptoe. It was short, written and illustrated by a young talented black, and

contained the universal theme that we seldom discover how much we like or enjoy a person or object until we have lost it. Before I read the book, I told the class about the author and asked them to decide if he was a good writer and illustrator. I have never read to a more attentive class! Afterwards I asked them if Robert had liked Stevie and one girl replied, "I think he thought he was a nice nuisance." In two words she had summarized the major theme of that story. Of course you could read to that class, but you had to select a story that spoke to the hearts and minds of those children.

Selecting Books for Children

Books that we read aloud to children should be carefully selected in terms of creating interest in reading and developing appreciation for fine writing. Too frequently the teacher pulls anything off the library shelf to keep the children quiet on Friday afternoons. Other teachers select books to read aloud that will enrich the social studies program. In fact, a recent dissertation completed at Ohio State University by Chow Loy Tom found that nearly 80 percent of the middle grade teachers who do read aloud to their students select books that correlate with social studies. This suggests that little attention is given to the literary experience of hearing *The Courage of Sarah Noble,* or *Carolina's Courage,* but that the emphasis is placed upon the facts of pioneer life and the westward expansion. Children may not be asked to *feel* as Sarah did when she was left alone with the Indians. They may never understand the symbolic meaning of Sarah's cloak, or appreciate the fine use of words by Elizabeth Yates in *Carolina's Courage.* This is using literature for wrong purposes and will never result in an increased understanding and appreciation for it.

Another method by which teachers select books to read aloud is to choose their favorite stories and poems. This approach at least allows the teacher to share her enthusiasm for that particular book or poem. The disadvantage of such an approach is that it provides for no particular balance in what is presented to children either at that level, or at various grade levels. In one survey of a school, we found *Charlotte's Web* was read aloud to the children in second,

fourth, fifth, and sixth grades! *Charlotte's Web* is one of the finest children's books of our times, but even so, I question the time spent in reading it aloud that often! Primary teachers will be reading many stories to their children; I hope a minimum of one a day. Hopefully, middle grade teachers will present parts of many books as book teasers to interest children in reading the books. But how many books will teachers read in their entirety? An educated guess might be that starting in the third grade when teachers begin to read longer continuous stories to boys and girls, an average of some four to five books are read aloud during the year. This means that from third grade through sixth grade, children may hear only some twenty books presented by their teacher. Surely, those twenty books should be selected carefully in terms of their relevance for the particular group of boys and girls and for the quality of their writing.

Providing Time for Books

If we are serious about creating an interest in books and a love of reading, we must provide the time for children to read books of their own choosing every day. Plato once said that what is honored in a country will be cultivated there. Go into the typical middle grade classroom and you will find students reading texts for information and instruction, but seldom will they be reading books for pleasure. Interest in reading is created by opportunity for wide reading. If we are as interested in making readers of our children, as in teaching them *to read,* we shall provide as much time for recreational reading as we do for instructional reading.

Interest in books is contagious, so we shall want to provide time for children to share their favorite books. This does not mean requiring a child to write a deadly dull book report or give an oral report every time he has finished a book. We should not penalize children for reading. It does mean providing time for children to get together and share their genuine enthusiasm for a book. I recall one nine-year-old boy who could hardly wait to talk about *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* with his friends. He started his discussion by taking a poll to see how many of five boys in the group had read this book. When he found that some of them had, he said,

"Well, you may wonder why I'd like a book with a picture of a girl on the cover, but this isn't like any other story I've ever read, and it is *so* good I've read it four times!" He then went on to discuss what Karana had done for the eighteen years that she had lived on the island alone. His enthusiasm for the book was genuine, his interest was obvious, and needless to say, the other boys in his group could hardly wait to read his book.

Reading Books in Depth

Wide reading is necessary for creating interest in books, but reading a book in depth is required for building appreciation for literature. Appreciation for literature is based upon more than enjoyment of books, it is founded upon knowledge and understanding of the idea of the book and the art of writing. Growth in appreciation is gradual and cumulative. The development of taste for literature results from long experience with good books.

Teachers need to know how to teach for literary appreciation. Always, I would begin with the child's response to the story, the way the story made him feel, its meaning for him. Only when I thought children were ready for it, would I ask "How did the author or poet create meaning?" Too frequently teachers do not know how to explore either the feeling or thinking levels of a book, but move children away from the book with extraneous concerns instead of back into the book for enrichment.

This fall I observed a teacher aide who asked all the wrong questions about Yashima's well-known story *Crow Boy*. Her first question to a group of inner-city fourth grade children was, "Where did the story take place?" There was a mad dash to the globe as everyone wanted to point out Japan. She then asked what Japan was, finally eliciting the word she wanted, namely "an island." Her next question concerned Crow Boy's lunch—"Why did he eat rice balls instead of a hamburger?" Eventually they got from an island to growing rice, but Crow Boy was lost along the way. At this point, I could no longer refrain from entering the discussion. I asked the children to recall how Chibi felt at the very beginning of the story. We looked again at the first picture of Chibi hiding under the schoolhouse, and the

next one that showed him cowering from the schoolmaster. Then I read them the last two pages that told of a grown-up but still shy Crow Boy who went back to his mountain home giving the cry of the happy crow. We talked about the way Chibi had changed and what had made him change. Looking at the endpapers of that book, I asked the children why Mr. Yashima might have painted a butterfly and blooming branch to represent the story. There was no response, so I asked one final question which was: "What was a butterfly before it was a butterfly?" One boy brandished his hand wildly and said in an excited voice. "It was a caterpillar and it *changed* into a butterfly, just like Chibi changed!"

The questions I asked redirected the children's thinking to the story and helped them see the interrelationship between Chibi's character change and the events that happened to him. Children discovered for themselves the symbolic meaning of Yashima's endpapers. They had read a story in depth, and rather than have a geography lesson, they had *experienced* literature.

Comparing and Contrasting

Children may develop new insights and discover new meanings in books and poems when they compare and contrast them. Sixth graders could explore the various dimensions of survival by comparing such books as *Island of the Blue Dolphins, The Cay,* and *My Side of the Mountain.* In which of these stories was survival the most difficult? How did enduring the hardships change the characters? Which story was the most believable?

Even young children can compare the theme of sibling rivalry as presented in the realistic story of *Peter's Chair* and the delightful fantasy of a family of badgers in *A Baby Sister for Frances.* In these books, primary children learn that not all baby brothers and sisters are immediately loved and accepted by their older siblings. They can also see how the same theme of the importance and individuality of every member of a family can be the basis for different plots.

Boys and girls may discover that excitement depends upon one's point of view in *Nothing Ever Happens on My Block.* The text of the farcical little book reflects Chester Filbert's dull point of view

that nothing exciting ever happens on his street, while the detailed pictures by Ellen Raskin portray amazing happenings at 5264 West One Hundred and Seventy-Seventh Street. Older children can identify the change in point of view in the Benéts' poem of "Abraham Lincoln," in which Lincoln's contemporaries complain that they need a man for troubled times but they have no idea where to find one. In the last verse of that poem, the point of view shifts to that of the modern poet who comments, "That is how they met and talked / Knowing and unknowing, / Lincoln was the green pine, / Lincoln kept on growing."

Planning a Literature Program

Appreciative response to literature does not develop from an in-depth study of one book. It results from the cumulative effect of hearing good books read aloud, discussing and comparing books, and reading and reacting to them from kindergarten through college. Such a program should not be haphazard and incidental. It should be planned and sequential in terms of the background and experience of the children and teachers. If teachers can agree on what literary skills should be taught, such as identification of types or genres of literature, knowledge of such literary constants as theme, characterization, plot, style, and setting, they can use a variety of meaningful books to teach these concepts. Flexibility and choice of books must be kept open, however, for nothing would kill interest in literature faster than to require all children in the elementary school to read certain books. (Look what happened to *Silas Marner!*) The literature program should be planned for each school, for each grade, and consequentially throughout the grades. Growth in appreciation is gradual and cumulative. The development of interest in and taste for literature results from a lifetime love affair with good books.

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Reaction to "Strategies for Improving Interest and Appreciation in Literature"

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In quoting the words of Sir John Herschel, Dr. Huck described the realms of literary satisfaction that books help us all to reach—the immortality of thoughts which we can share. I would like to add the conclusion of Andrew Carnegie, who decided early in life that the use of money most productive of good to boys and girls was the founding of public libraries in order to help youngsters with ability and ambition to develop the good within themselves.

We do, indeed, need public libraries and school libraries to provide children with the opportunity to develop an appreciation of literature. But, as has been pointed out, we cannot develop appreciative readers until we have captured their interest in reading. One of the most significant principles in motivation in learning is interest. This is a dynamic, projective, propulsive factor in encouraging children to read. It is particularly critical in teaching boys to read and to enjoy reading. Boys have a smaller range of reading interests than girls, and their interests focus upon the unusual and the exciting. This is well illustrated by Dr. Huck's reference to the little boy who was captivated by *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Although the book is based upon the experiences of a girl, it has all the elements which boys like best in reading material: unusual experiences, excitement, suspense, and an outdoor setting. Books with these characteristics "turn boys on." They are marvelous for reading aloud and discussing, as well as for silent, recreational reading. I concur that teachers must be carefully selective in their choice of stories and poems, and I think we must always keep boys' interests in mind in making our selections. Although girls enjoy reading books that appeal to boys, boys do *not* enjoy reading "girlish stuff." Boys' interests in reading material reflect their interests in games and

recreation. We don't expect boys to play with dolls or doll houses, so why should we expect them to enjoy books about home and family life? Let's make sure they have plenty of books about exploring and adventure—exciting stories such as London's *Call of the Wild*, Rosemary Sutcliff's *Outcast*, or Leonard Wibberley's *Dead Man's Cave*. Science fiction is a "must" today and there are some excellent, well-written books in this field; Heinlein's *Space Cadet* and John Christopher's *The White Mountains* can offer serious competition to the all-time classic, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. And, of course, books on sports and sports heroes rate high with our boy readers. Curtis Bishop has written some great sports stories—*Halftime Hero* and *Little League Amigo* are among the best. And for boys who think of nothing but "wheels," there are books like *Hotrod* by Gregor Selsen. Books like these should be a basic part of our strategy to improve interest and appreciation in literature.

Both boys and girls respond enthusiastically to imaginative literature. Books that stimulate the imagination are a delight to read and to discuss. Robert Lawson's books—*Ben and Me* is a very special example—are always sure to arouse and hold children's interest. And, of course, Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* is a treasury of episodes which help children to think creatively and which motivate them to read for enjoyment.

I would also like to comment on Dr. Huck's choice of *Stevie* to read to sixth graders in an inner-city school. The pupils listened and responded because they could relate to the story and its characters. Relevance is a very important factor in motivating children to read. For teaching the disadvantaged, it is absolutely essential. We must be constantly aware of the relationship of school life to the life that is lived by the student, so that we can blend these elements of their environment into a meaningful pattern. Children's literature provides a valuable tool to accomplish this because, through literature, we can offer a variety of rich experiences with which children can relate. And, at the same time, we are whetting their appetites for reading—a most effective strategy for improving interest and appreciation in literature.

I agree wholeheartedly that appreciation of literature is based

upon more than enjoyment of books—that it is founded upon knowledge and understanding of the story and the art of writing. I would like to quote the 17th century philosopher, John Locke, who said, "Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours." And it is through literature that we can develop the high cognitive skills. Again, I agree that teachers frequently do not know how to explore the feeling or thinking levels of a book to develop these skills. A well-written story literally begs to be taught in depth, and children respond to an author's artistry with words when they are guided by skillful questioning to make inferences about the characters' feelings, to draw conclusions about their actions, to make predictions about the outcome of events, or to discuss the significance of happenings in a story. *Charlotte's Web* is an outstanding example. Although reading it for four grades in a row is certainly overexposure, this is a wonderful story for teaching inferences, and children respond to its sensitivity with deep feeling.

One of the most important comprehension skills is that of predicting outcomes. There are many excellent stories which can be used to teach this skill effectively and, at the same time, to hold the reader's interest by challenging him to look for clues in the content to support his predictions. Some good examples from all-time favorites are *Treasure Island, Kidnapped,* and Howard Pease's *Secret Cargo.*

Skills which seem difficult for children to master can be taught effectively and creatively by careful selection of books to read aloud. For example, such stories as *The Happy Owls* by Celestino Piatt and *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry are excellent for teaching children to determine the significance of characters or events in a story or to interpret the author's meaning.

There is a wealth of material on our library shelves which can be used to develop meaningful reading experiences and thus improve children's interest and appreciation of literature. In order to take advantage of this source of enrichment, the teacher must know how to guide the reader. Dr. Huck told of her observation of an inexperienced teacher's aide whose inept questioning completely bypassed the real significance of the story, *Crow Boy.* Here lies the key to apprecia-

tion of literature. By definition, to appreciate is to be conscious of the significance or worth of something. To help children appreciate a story, the teacher must help them to discover its essential values—the concepts it expresses and the way these concepts are expressed. This is a real challenge because it is not easy to guide readers' or listeners' reactions to a story, yet maintain their interest at a high level. Interdependence of interest and appreciation requires almost an artistry on the part of a teacher; an awareness and sensitivity to the children's interests, needs, and tastes; the creativity to stimulate their imagination for involvement in vicarious experiences; and the ability to develop their understanding of the story by pertinent and provocative questioning. This three-dimensional approach expands the function of literature in the curriculum and heightens its significance in the education of children.

Developing Reading Skills Through Literature

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> Not many years ago it was the almost universal custom to destroy a pupil's potential liking for good reading by the use of the coroner's inquest method. The best in literature was painfully dissected under the delusion that this performance (highly improper though it was) would develop an appreciation on the part of students and aid them in developing a good writing style.
>
> What they gained was a horror of good literature in general and of the classics in particular.
>
> On top of this destructive system was the custom of planning all school reading on an adult's opinion as to what a child should like—rather than on what pupils can and will appreciate. While adult experience is valuable, such experience must be based on knowledge of juvenile taste and capacity.

The above quotations, excerpts from *The New Outlook* for May 1924, could have been written yesterday.

Another writer of about the same time observed that students seek out for reading—just as adults do—that which is emotionally stimulating. He noted that literature to a student is a thing in school and therefore once removed from reality; it is a thing in books and therefore twice removed from reality; it deals with the dead past and is therefore as remote as Julius Caesar or a world war which the student never knew.

Have you stood in a high school hall recently and heard students comment on the literature class they have just escaped? Have you talked to any of them about their likes and dislikes in literature? Have you become well enough acquainted with them to know what they are really concerned about, what they are interested in, what their real needs are?

It is not legend that many, many high schools are still using a comparatively small body of traditional material for the major part

of the course. Nor is it farfetched that analytical study and discussion still occupy undue amounts of time. Nor is it hard to believe that the range and amount of voluntary reading done by high school students is relatively small.

Reading interest studies, notably that of Norvell (*8*), have demonstrated that students actually dislike many of the books and selections they are forced to read in school. As Samuel Johnson said long ago, "One ought to read just as inclination takes him, for what he reads as a task will do him little good." Most teachers are quite aware that students need to be pushed, guided, and directed, often led to read, but successful teachers also know that reading done under coercion seldom produces desirable results.

Little wonder that such a meager relationship exists between what is taught in the literature class and that which students read later. Brown (*1*) believes that for every one who continues to read the type of literature he read in high school, there are hundreds who read only paperbacks and magazines. In your own circle of friends, do you discuss plot, subplot, and character analysis of the book you have just read? Do you interpret or paraphrase on a line-by-line basis? Or, do you rave enthusiastically about the content, or the way the author treated this or that? Do you compare the work with others on the same subject or by the same writer?

Dissection of literary works has always been painful to students who are somewhere near the bottom of the ladder in appreciation, as compared to the teacher who stands on or near the top rung. Apperceptively and experientially unable to cope with the material, students often offer only token responses to the teacher who, armed with her college class notes, anticipates high-level discussions. The situation has not changed considerably from the time when Husband (*4*), studying the characteristics of high school readers, stated, "In the degree that a reading situation exerts a compulsion toward preciseness in interpretation, it tends to create a negative response. . . ."

Need for Change in Rationale

If we are genuinely and sincerely interested in producing students who love to read and who have permanent and diversified reading interests and habits, we must insist on a change in the

rationale of literature courses. No valid reason has been offered for maintaining status quo, that is, restricting student reading in literature to that which appears in the anthology (in use for years), or to those "must-read" lists (usually compiled by adults), who feel that the included selections are "good for" readers on whatever level.

To be wedded to an age-old collection of readings or a reading list, or a course of study in 1970 is to close one's eyes to the issue at hand: meeting the needs and interests of today's high school population. Neither literature class nor learning in general need to be painful and unenjoyable. They most certainly can and should be highly pleasurable. There is nothing really wrong with departing, even radically, from the traditional in literature if the departure is beneficial to some students.

Since literature is a course for all students, it should contain something for everybody; its benefits and pleasures should not be restricted to the few who can respond to literary effects and devices. Culture always emerges slowly, but it perhaps does not come at all to those who never contact it on a level they can understand. How appropriate can the historical approach to English literature be to young readers who live in a modern city and have only a very limited relation to English history?

Brown (*1*) believes that students are not necessarily stupid because they prefer reading about a baseball player's technique to *Romeo and Juliet*. He states further:

> For every English teacher who dotes on Prometheus, a thousand modern youngsters want to know the thrilling story of the satellites. Should we insist that they wade through a million pages of mythology before they read one word about modern medicine, or the conquest of the Arctic by a modern Nautilus?

Getzels (*2*) discussing a similar point states:

> The child who remembers the batting average to the third decimal place, of a dozen members of his favorite baseball team, may also be the one who cannot remember the single date of the discovery of America. It is silly to think of him as having baseball intelligence and history stupidity. What he has is baseball interest and history indifference.

Students with those same characteristics occupy seats in literature classes daily.

Herber (*3*) suggests walking through the halls of a junior or senior high school any day of the week and finding in at least 80 percent of the rooms that the students are only passively involved in the learning process, with the teacher being the active participant. Somehow in the mind of this writer this is the picture of a typical high school literature class.

Suggested Remedies

Now what can be done? Teachers must be convinced that students will read more and better quality material when they are given free reading time, when they are permitted to help choose selections, when a wide variety of materials is available to them, when the material does not have to be scanned nor dissected nor labeled. Then a major part of the problem is solved.

The teachers' realization that if they want students to enjoy literature the assignment of suitable selections is much more influential than the teaching method used, will make a tremendous impact on students' attitude toward the subject. If appreciation of the best in literature is a desired goal, it need not start with the best. Jennings (*5*) insists that the course should not begin with the classics or with "rich and ennobling masterpieces."

LaBrant (*6*), in an address at the convention of the National Council of Teachers of English several years ago, proposed:

> We should teach literature which is adapted to the social, emotional, and intellectual understanding of our students. We should choose literature in terms of the maturity of our students so that they can grasp its values. You do not give a pupil his literary heritage by giving him something he does not understand.

These suggestions do make sense to discerning teachers. So does the idea that what happens to a reader as he reads is what really counts; this is what gives significance to who did what to whom, the birth and death of the author, and what a critic said he thought the author said, according to Jennings (*5*).

It is no secret that even slow children read rather well that which interests them and all of us return again and again to that which we like and succeed at. Our endeavors in teaching literature must be directed toward finding interesting materials of all types on all levels so that students will return often to reading. Most students will give you their best efforts if they feel that what you are showing them is interesting and that you know where you are going and where you want them to go. Following this principle, we can hopefully lead them incrementally and sequentially to the reading of better and better works.

In addition, teachers must realize that their acceptance of works which students select for themselves is a vital matter; ridiculing things which students like is putting the kiss of death on those which you recommend, since many students are already somewhat reluctant to read what teachers suggest. Remember not to force your opinion of a book upon a student who is not ready to receive it. It is doubtful that there really are books that must be read when one is twelve any more than there are books to be read when one is fifty. All students need not read the same selection at the same time.

The Skills

The study group report, a portion of the *Response to Literature* publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, 1968, includes a statement which may well be the key to the present dilemma: "The primary center of the whole activity of reading is some sort of state in our feelings that we can call, for lack of better word, enjoyment."

Other writers and teachers have told much the same story—that skill development comes faster and easier to the student who is rewarded in terms of pleasure and achievement. And, perhaps more importantly, it comes because the student with a better attitude about the content of the course, the classroom, and the teacher, helps it arrive.

The skills usually are acquired at a slow rate; they are learned at different times and in relation to many diverse selections, according to Loban, Ryan, and Squire (7). These authors interpret the

teacher's role as being twofold: 1) "to help students find meaning and experience in literary works," and 2) "to help them develop appreciation for literary form." These expand into the teacher's goal which is to guide "the selection of books and to help adolescents read literature as human experience."

Instructors must constantly be alert to placing too much emphasis on comprehension of facts or understanding of stylistic features. Often this stress can be more profitably employed in observing the approaches and responses students make. In this regard, teachers should be attempting to cultivate sincerity and honesty on the part of students as well as a freedom from inhibition in responding. Students will react in these ways when they are convinced that their comments will be respected and not held up for ridicule or comparison with those of literary critics.

Several of the critical reading skills such as weighing and considering evidence, seeing the relationship between form and content, appreciating the connotations of words and the variations in meanings of symbols, and the development of character must be taught if a student is to be independent in his reading and if he is to respond freely.

In addition, the student's ability in detecting the devices of writers must be developed; such things as point of view, versification, imagery, and figurative language must become a part of his repertoire if he is to become skillful. To become acquainted with the ways in which poets achieve effects is, for a student, a giant step toward deriving meaning from hitherto unfathomable verse. But to permit the mechanics of poetry to overshadow the impact of a poem on a student is sheer folly.

Poetry has been poorly taught, generally speaking. Students have had little chance until recently to express their likes and dislikes in the area. Instead, they have been asked to study and analyze poetry that was far out of line with their needs and experiences. Written by adults in another era and adored by teachers, the poetry seldom touched people of high school age. Both sexes place it at the bottom of their reading list.

This can be changed; it should be changed; it must be changed —if we want our students to read and appreciate poetry. Is it not

possible to teach that people make poetry from verse by their acceptance of it and their reaction to it? Is it not possible to start such a project with the favorite poems of students and to keep our fingers on the students' pulses by having them supply some of the materials for class? Further, teachers must search and search diligently for poetic materials which touch teenagers in many ways so that they learn to feel comfortable in interpreting and responding. The use of inductive means for teaching and learning this and other genres holds great promise for both instructors and students. The problem is to convince teachers to try it.

Summary

No attempt has been made in this paper to formulate an exhaustive list of reading skills. In its place has been substituted a mixture of skills, materials, and the rationale or climate for employing them.

The following suggestions for facilitating and implementing the development of skills through the high school literature course are made for the express purpose of encouraging teachers to attempt to change the atmosphere of their classes and the attitudes of their students:

- Try to accept that most mature readers arrive at that point by much the same methods, despite certain individual differences.
- Be aware that the reading depression in adolescence seems to run parallel with pressure applied to students to read that which does not appeal to them.
- Observe that high school readers pass through stages in which they find satisfaction in content; in picturing themselves as important parts of the world; in seeing themselves as normal human beings; in seeing life's problems and the prevalent ideas of life, such as peace and war, wrong and right, love, birth, and death; and, when reading maturity arrives, in sensing the relationship of form in writing to what is being written about.

- Recognize the finality that comes from these stages. No one can explain it to a student. If he has undergone it, he does not need explanation.
- Remember how slowly and painfully reading pleasure came to you.
- Present literature not as a study of aesthetics—but as human experience.
- Endeavor to create a love of and for reading.
- Make available a wide variety of material on many levels; provide browsing time.
- Permit students to exercise wide freedom of choice in reading materials; provide free reading time.
- Do not force students to read only what the teacher likes or considers beautiful, great, or classical.
- Discontinue much of the analytical study of literature; substitute exploratory reading and reading for fun.
- Evaluate the biases and preferences of teachers and consider how appropriate they are for high school students.
- Reappraise the value and use of book reports (especially formal ones), lists of required readings, and the insistence that all students read certain things at a given grade level.
- Encourage students to share and recommend good reading.
- Consider the future reading of students; devote proportionate time to newspaper and magazine reading.

Let us make an effort to teach enjoyment, even if it cannot be taught. Many of the concerns we now have may disappear. We cannot lose too much; the current practices are not producing people who love to read.

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The Content of Literature in the High School

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TWO YEARS AGO I MET with the English teachers of a large senior high school in Florida to discuss plans for the year's program in literature. The first question for discussion was: What novels should be studied in common by the students in the tenth grade? Then we went on to what novels should be studied in the eleventh and twelfth grades, and then, of course, on to short stories, plays, and poems. End of anecdote—a nonseismic one indeed—but it introduces a necessary preliminary point: the need to differentiate between content and materials in the literature program. Traditionally, in curriculum planning, the two have not been differentiated. Curriculum decisions in literature have begun with the kinds of questions my teachers asked: what selections will be studied at what level, or, more simply, what series of textbook anthologies will be adopted? One eventually does get to the specifics of selections to be studied, but in so doing one is concerned with materials, not content. Today, determining the content of the literature program is not establishing a canon of literature to be studied. The content of the program, as opposed to the enabling materials, is two-dimensional. First, and fundamental, are concepts concerning literature as art and as experience. Second, certain activities in which students engage when studying literature may be considered allied content.

Concepts as Content

The concepts to be at the heart of the curriculum will be identified, in turn, on the basis of some definition of the structure of literature. In the absence of clear agreement on *the* structure of literature, I propose *a* structure, a three-layered one—substance, mode, and form—and I suggest that students should develop some concepts about each of these elements at each level of the school.

Substance, of course, refers to what literature is about. It seems that all literature is about man in four major relationships: man and his gods, man and the natural world, man and other men, and man and himself. Out of these relationships come the archetypal themes or central myths of human experience—the quest myth, the edenic or alienation myth, the initiation myth, the demonic myth, and the Faustian myth. It is important that the student deal with these relationships and these archetypal themes or myths as he studies literature.

Identification of archetypal themes or myths can greatly inform the study of American literature and provide at least a partial answer to the question, "What is American about American literature?" Certain patterns of belief and of behavior have taken on the qualities of myth in the American culture. Major among these, more or less in the chronology of their development, are these:

1. The Puritan myth, or the dangers of happiness. One archetypal literary figure in this myth might be that most unhappy man Ethan Frome.
2. The frontier myth of the unlimited possibilities for the individual who has strength, courage, and wit. Here, the great archetypal figure, I suppose, is Lincoln.
3. The myth of the significance of the individual's everyday life, given great voice in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and in some contemporary poetry.
4. The myth of the importance of material success, more often attacked than celebrated in literature.
5. The myth of youth's alienation from adult society, developed in the past twenty years. Holden Caulfield of Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* is one of its most widely known archetypal figures.

Mode in Literature

Mode refers to the general point of view on life experience which a literary selection represents. Since each work is by an indi-

vidual, that individual's vantage point on life is often evident, though many selections cannot be classified neatly as to mode. The modal approach has been given special vitality through the work of Northrop Frye who identifies four modes—romantic, comic, tragic, and ironic. Frye (*1*), in his book, *Fables of Identity*, identifies basic modes in terms of the human condition which they frame: the nature and predicament of the hero or protagonist. If the hero is superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, we have the typical romance and its literary affiliates, the legend and the folktale. If the protagonist is superior in degree to other men and is a leader but is not superior to his natural environment, we have the hero of most tragedy and epic. If the hero is superior neither to other men nor to his environment, we have the comic mode. If he is inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves so that we have a sense of looking down on a scene of frustration or absurdity, the protagonist belongs to the ironic mode. The value to the student of the modal approach is to enrich the possibilities of literature as a study of the human condition.

Form refers to the various genres and subgenres of imaginative literature—fiction, poetry, and drama—as well as to certain elements of structure—point of view, setting, and dialogue—and to certain devices—metaphor and symbol—which are common to more than one genre. It is concern with form that basically differentiates study of literature from study of psychology, sociology, ethics, or something else.

Once the teacher has determined the concepts he wishes to develop, he is ready to select literary materials appropriate for the level of given groups of students, selections not only in the printed form but in the nonprint media as well. In most schools, literature study must take on a more gut-level quality than it now has—strong beer, not pink lemonade. Adolescents themselves will make it thus, if not in school, where movies such as *The Graduate* and *Midnight Cowboy* are more impactful than *Our Town*, where novels such as *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* and *Giovanni's Room* are more memorable than *Great Expectations*, where Simon and Garfunkel are more relevant than Wordsworth and Masefield.

Allied Activities

The second and subsidiary dimension of content in literature involves the happenings in the classroom surrounding the study of literature, activities which may have values in themselves but which are also allied to developing the concepts we have been discussing. Chief among these activities are discussion, certain oral and dramatic activities, and certain writing activities.

A crucial point in the teaching of literature is that at which teacher and students discuss a selection read in common. Unfortunately, too often this is the point at which teachers "have discussion" with no real objectives in mind, or at which, conversely, teachers pry out of students the school solutions to the selection. Group discussion of a work, with a teacher posing well conceived convergent and divergent questions, can serve two general objectives: 1) illuminate the student's reading of the work and increase his involvement with it, and 2) increase his ability to deal with the particular genre or matters of form which the work represents.

Gordon (*2*) has proposed a useful paradigm for questioning which may furnish the basis for talk about a work. Gordon's hierarchy of five levels of questions is based on the degree of abstraction demanded by each level, as follows (material in brackets is the author's, not Gordon's):

1. Questions requiring the student to remember a fact in a selection.
   [What objects did the poet refer to?
   What happened in the story immediately after the storm?]
2. Questions that require the student to prove or disprove a generalization someone else has made.
   [One critic has said that _____. Can you cite any examples from the novel to substantiate this?
   Or the teacher may pose an hypothesis for the students to prove or disprove:
   This story is an attack upon _____.]
3. Questions that require the student to derive his own generalizations.

[What relationship do the coffee drinking scenes in the novel have to the central theme?
How does the poet make use of flower symbols?
If there is little or no response to the question, the teacher needs to go back to simpler levels and build up to this level again: Where is a red rose referred to in the poem? Can you find any support for this interpretation: The rose symbolizes _____. Now what other flower symbols do you find?]

4. Questions that require the student to generalize about the relation of the total work to human experience.
[What is the universal human problem dramatized in _____?]
5. Questions that require the student to carry generalizations derived from the work into his own life.
[Is the kind of experience which this poem glorifies one that your friends value?]

Oral and dramatic activities also may be important concomitants of study of literature. Oral reading of literature—by students and teachers or from recordings—has two major purposes: 1) the esthetic one of providing another dimension of experience with literature and 2) the practical one of aiding comprehension and appreciation. Listening to literature read aloud is an experience many students recall with pleasure from their English classes. Rather frequently oral reading is an aid to heightened comprehension, for example, in increasing awareness of the effect of literary devices. Certain poems must be read aloud if students are to sense the effect of particular types of rhyme or meter or appreciate elements such as tone color.

Dramatic activities, particularly improvised drama, have gained considerable importance recently, both in this country and in England, as an integral part of the literature program. Various benefits are claimed for such activities, but the particular contribution of improvised drama to the study of literature is summarized by Moffett (*3*) in his pamphlet on dramatic activities.

> Before a child can enjoy drama in script form—play reading—he can do so by creating the imitative actions of which scripts are a blueprint. Later, his power to bring a script alive in his

> mind is constantly recharged by his continued experience in inventing dramas. For narrative, improvisation renders a special service: it translates *what happened* back to *what is happening.* . . . For older students, converting narrative to drama demonstrates the relationship of the two: plays specify what narrative summarizes, and narrative, unlike drama, is told by someone addressing us.
>
> And, finally, improvisation can be used as an entree into a literary work soon to be read: the teacher abstracts key situations —say, Cassius' efforts to persuade Brutus to join the conspiracy —and assigns this as a situation to improvise before students read the work, so that when they do read it they already have an understanding of what is happening and of how differently the characters *might* have behaved. This kind of prelude also involves students more with the text.

Writing about Literature

Much of the writing program, though not necessarily all of it, can grow out of the study of literature. There seem to be three basic kinds of writing related to literature study: 1) Noncritical writing for which ideas or literary elements in a selection serve as springboards; 2) interpretative and critical writing; and 3) imitative writing.

Writing about literature that is read is a long-established activity of the high school English class. Teachers frequently use literature to motivate writing, with students further developing points raised in class discussion or attempting to imitate writers' styles or techniques, and student skill in criticism or interpretation is frequently tested through writing assignments. Probably the most valuable type of writing as a component of literature study is that designed to expand or clarify central concepts. This type of writing may be illustrated by this assignment given by a teacher to his eleventh-grade class which had studied the novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers:

> In our discussion of *The Heart* . . . we have talked about the quest motif or quest myth. Each of the major characters in the

novel are in quest of something. Most of them, we noted, are unsuccessful. Think of another selection of literature you have read in which the quest myth is present. Discuss the nature of the quest(s) and compare the treatment of it with that in *The Heart*. Was the quest successful or not? What obstacles were there in the path of the quest?

Oral and written activities, then, may be considered part of the content of the literature program when they are directly allied to deepening and reinforcing the concepts which are the heart of the matter.

I have tried to say in essence that the content of the literature program is defined not in terms of a canon of literature but rather in terms of concepts concerning substance, mode, and form in literature. Concept development, of course, rests on materials and on certain activities which become the allied content of the program. The objective of it all as a totality is an intangible but vital goal: the birth of a literary sensibility on the part of all students.

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The Role of Literature in Fostering International Relations

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IN A WORLD OF instantaneous communication through radio, satellites, and television, one may well inquire as to why there should be concern for the role of literature in fostering international relations. Aren't these electronic inventions much swifter and more effective than books?

The truth of the matter is that nations can already probe the skies, monitor broadcasts, and detect the most subtle kinds of military preparations. However, these intrusions into the affairs of even friendly nations may hinder rather than help international relations. What is badly needed is a renewed effort to build bridges between groups and nations—to probe the motives and feelings of others, to detect and understand problems others encounter—in order to forge a lasting world peace. Literature will help in this endeavor.

International education attempts to sensitize students to national characteristics, customs, beliefs, and attitudes, enabling them to realize and appreciate differences and similarities between groups of people. Plainly, then, intercultural studies should strengthen rather than undermine the individual's patriotic sentiments (*8*).

Avenues for Fostering International Relations

There are at least four avenues for fostering international relations, but three of them are limited and circumscribed as one notes by examining them.

Individual contacts. Face-to-face meetings are valuable for getting to know people better, but for the most part, only a small percentage of the world's people ever travel to other countries or get to know one another on a one-to-one basis.

Letters, tapes. These means of communication, though more frequent and possible than individual contacts, hardly suffice to

penetrate barriers to facilitate mutual understanding on a broad spectrum.

Broadcasts and telecasts. Although cultural broadcasts and telecasts periodically are beamed to other countries, much of this kind of activity is propagandistic in nature and is devoted to swaying the beliefs of citizens of other countries. In almost all instances, these broadcasts peddle isms, assail one another's weaknesses, and trigger animosities.

Literature. The fourth mode of fostering international relations is through literature, and it is this theme that will be developed in this paper.

America—Within and Without

Before moving to the international arena, one must first examine the American scene, as others view it, in order to get a glimpse of the scope and magnitude of the problem of trying to understand others. To many nations, Americans are immature, boastful of their technological achievements, selfish, and easily given to violence and conquest. Moreover, foreigners believe that the American culture is hedonistic and materialistic. Hollywood-made movies reinforce the belief that everyone here drives a big car and is wealthy and that many are gangsters. Americans exhibit a great deal of religious piety and missionary zeal but they do not hesitate to go to war, or to seize territory belonging to another if the opportunity presents itself (*3*).

Is this an accurate picture of the good old U.S.A.? While some of it is true, most Americans would recoil at such a picture.

Now, a characterization of the Germans: According to some sources, Germans are aggressive, warlike, consume great quantities of beer, and eat "heavy" food. Is this an accurate picture? This writer did not find it to be true at all, although he found some instances where such was the case. The Germans he met were friendly, helpful, courteous, and moderate in their drinking and eating habits.

Why Literature Can Be Utilized

An excellent means of communication can be found in literature. Of all devices open to mankind, literature is one of the best vehicles for creating good will, promoting understanding, and clear-

ing up misconceptions. This assertion can be made for at least three reasons. First, literature—those writings which have stood the test of time or whose message is so potent and accurate that it speaks to all generations—is a *common denominator.* That is to say, many people read, and thus share a common interest, a common pursuit, and get to know one another's way of life much better, although they may be separated by a concrete wall, ocean barrier, or other impediment. However, the number of such readers comprise a small part of the world's population. This fact suggests that the continued job ahead for teachers is to cultivate an appreciation for literature on the part of their students as a means of increasing world understanding.

In addition to being a common denominator for world folk, literature is a *mirror* through which people see themselves. It, indeed, acts as a reflecting pool in which a person may see the great moments of his country's history as well as the dark periods. For example, one can take pride in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and read it as one of the greatest documents of the world. At the same time, he views another aspect of conditions existing during the same decade upon reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* While some literature is overdrawn and the characters emerge as exotic or larger than life, the thoughtful reader will see the reflection of an age or era and through it gain an appreciation of the problems and issues of the times.

A third reason literature contributes to improved international relations is that it gives *perspective* and *balance.* In a real sense, this is part of the job of history, but literature also serves this function. Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* reveals the beauty and graciousness of the Old South, but at the same time, the reader sees the description of an economic system built upon slave labor with all of its inherent evils. One sees in lesser known books, such as *By Secret Railway* by Meadowcraft and *Railroad to Freedom* by Swift, a much more definitive picture of the problems of the era and one gains an appreciation for the oppressed black man whose greatest ambition was to escape from the prison of plantation life.

Role of Literature in Fostering International Relations

There are several ways in which literature fits into the role of fostering international relations.

Literature can promote an awareness of the similarity of problems between nations. While the United States struggles with the problems of urbanization and all it entails, this same syndrome is troubling West Africa, according to Hilda Kuper in *Urbanization and Migration in West Africa* (*5*). In Africa, as in America, the movement from farm to city has created unemployment in technological industries while at the same time bringing on a shortage of farm labor. To cite another example—though quite removed from West Africa—the village of Nayon, near Quito, Ecuador, was transformed into suburbia by the construction of a railroad which brought "civilization," and with it the attendant problems of disintegration of the family and of the individual. These conditions were unknown to life in that small remote village until it was joined to Quito by modern transportation.

All people have similar problems, such as creating and maintaining sanitary living conditions and eradicating communicable diseases. Pollution of the environment is an example of another problem facing inhabitants of almost all countries. These examples, as well as others which could be supplied, attest to the existence of many common problems. Through literature, one comes to appreciate ways by which others have confronted and triumphed over difficulties similar to one's own problems.

Literature reveals man's quest for peace though the route may seem hazy and circuitous. One cannot read the great literature of Europe, or any other country, without becoming amazed at the number of disputes, uprisings, rebellions, and skirmishes—not to mention full scale assaults and wars—which recur throughout. Almost every piece of territory has belonged to various dukes, empires, and kingdoms at different times in history. One is surprised that there have not been more wars when one reads books like *Germany 2,000 Years* (*6*). When one reads further about Germany, for instance, he finds out that entire volumes have been written just to explore the German "question," or the German "problem." Each country has its own set of questions and problems, and while each is challenged to find a satisfactory internal solution, one is not always forthcoming (*2*).

It is important to emphasize that literature provides help in understanding world tensions. At the same time, the impression should not be left that all one must do, if he wishes to solve prob-

lems of world peace, is to read. Obviously, the quandary is much deeper. But a step is the first part of a thousand mile journey, and the beginning of a new era in international relations may be ushered in when people first opt to learn—through reading—about the conditions others live in and the problems they face.

Literature helps people see the humanness of others. This is seen in the fact that everyone has similar social, psychological, and physiological needs. Food, shelter, and clothing are the primary ones. Furthermore, people are alike in that they need security, acceptance, achievement, and a feeling of worthiness. Anthropologists declare that people of the world are becoming more alike than different in in their habits, customs, and aspirations. One youth in a remote Pacific island reported that his parents "moved from the Stone Age into the present age within 30 years." *Time* magazine (7) quoted him as saying "My father was a cannibal, but I'm going to be a doctor."

In elementary school, students should begin this process of identification by learning how people make a living, what kinds of homes they live in, and what others eat and wear. A casual glance at the latest list of children's books will provide an almost inexhaustible supply of well-written titles. Young people will learn from literature about holidays around the world. It may come as a shock to some of them to learn that other countries have no Fourth of July celebration but have their own day of liberation.

Possible Solutions to Teaching About International Relations

What then can be done to more effectively utilize literature in the role of fostering international relations? The following suggestions are germane.

The teacher himself should become more sensitized to the problems of international relations and to avenues for achieving world peace. Edmund Burke once wrote: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." This statement suggests that the problems of world order must be taken seriously by everyone. There is abundant proof that social studies textbooks of all countries contribute to misunderstanding and prejudice by omitting appropriate materials or by failure to present sufficient data

where needed. Two books illuminate this subject, one by Billington (*1*) and another by Dance (*4*).

Frequent contacts with students and visitors from other countries should be encouraged. Next to travel, this source of information is one of the best known for learning about remote places.

Teachers should take advantage of United Nations Day and other important occasions to emphasize other cultures. Periodicals such as *The Americas,* published by the Organization of American States, will stimulate students to learn more about their nearest neighbors—Canada, Mexico, South and Central America—as they study about people who are more remote in time and place. A gigantic job lies ahead in finding additional ways to use literature in fostering international relations. Young people must be stimulated to learn to read early in life, to acquire the habit of reading worthwhile books, and to maintain this habit once they leave the classroom.

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